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CALVARY:
A TRAGEDY OF SECTS



CALVARY

A TRAGEDY OF SECTS

BY
"RITA"



TORONTO : THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
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PREFACE

THIS book embodies the subject of many years' anxious thought and study of religious systems. They demanded written expression, and yet counselled waiting on the spirit of the times. I publish it with many misgivings. Yet I feel that those who have *known* the soul's struggle for Truth will understand my meaning. Those who have not, may scoff as they please.

" RITA."

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A TRAGEDY OF SECTS

PROLOGUE

THE VISION

A FAR in high Heaven the great Archangel Michael stood, and leaning on his sword looked out upon the Earth. A tiny globe—a speck of light—whirling amongst a million other lights of greater or lesser significance in the Immensity of Space.

And as he looked the distance between himself and that dim world lessened, and with swift and sudden motion he swept downwards and stood poised upon a giant rock; a mighty pyramid that reared itself from out the sea.

All around the great ocean rolled in long, languid waves, save at one point where the causeway to the Mount began. A natural path led landwards from its base. With full tide the Mount stood to sight as an island approachable only by sea. With low water it became a promontory, a mile in circumference; its high crest crowned by a ruined chapel, of which the Cross alone remained. A large stone cross, grey with centuries of storm and stress. The baptism of fierce rains had worn it to smoothness. The sea's soft breath had crystallized its stones. The changing seasons had clothed it with lichen softness, and at its base the gorse and sea-thyme spread protecting arms.

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The hour was close on sunset ; the sky a dream of rose and gold ; and the voice of the sea was a voice of mystery and of woe. The dirge of dying days, of wearied Time, sounded in its voice, and swelled upwards in a mad rebellion. For of all the prisoned forces of Life there is none so great and so rebellious as that chained force of mighty waters. For ever has sounded its unavailing plaint. For ever will it sound while the world exists.

The voices of all the sorrow and all the passion of the living earth sound in the sea. The tears of the mourner are in its depths, and the despair of the dying—and the dead. To its breast have come the betrayer and betrayed ; the sinner and the sin. To it has been given the labour of man, and the gold he has coveted—and lost. Cradled in its depths lie the babe and the mother ; the dotard in life's senility ; the youth in life's springtide. It holds all mystery of love and passion and despair. All the soul's longing, and the earth's futile effort to satisfy man's desire !

In the golden sunset the great Archangel listened to its voice, and thus he answered it :

"Hearken, O Sea ! Thou torrent of mighty waters loosened by the Creator's word ere yet this globe was peopled for thy encirclement ! A rebel hast thou been—and a rebel still thou art—and they who love thee ever rue thy love. For as a woman art thou in thy treachery, and like a woman thou servest worst those who love thee best. Yet great has been thy service to mankind, for on thy stormy breast thou hast borne the message of Eternal Life !"

Then a sudden peace seemed to fall upon the earth. The voice ceased, and all was still. The glory of the sunset died out of the sky. The sea-birds flew to the shelter of the rocks. Nothing stirred or seemed alive save the ever-moving waters. The Angel looked from the grey sea to the shadowy land, and once again his voice sounded like a trumpet-call of Doom :

"And thou, O Earth ! accursed by man's sin and by man to be redeemed—how long shalt thou challenge Almighty Patience and defy thy fate ? How long shall thy priests lift sin-stained hands and crafty eyes to God's

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altars, and, calling on His name with their lips, deny Him by their lives? How long shall the message of Eternal Love find only the translation of hypocrites, or swell the chorus of ambition? How long shall sect and creed rave madly of their own petty exaltation? How long shall Error sit enthroned as Truth—while Truth stands with veiled eyes in uncared for obscurity? How long, O Man! shall Immortal Patience wait on thee—and Immortal Love cry vainly for one faithful messenger to speak the word of Truth? To bear the Promise of Divine Pardon?"

The voice ceased again. And as it ceased something stirred and rose from the rocks at the base of the great Mount that bore the Angel's name.

The Angel looked down and met the rapt and wondering eyes of a young child. For a space that long and silent gaze held each in a spell of soul-entrancement. No spoken word broke it for one long moment. Then the voice of the child swept upwards to where that mighty Figure stood. And thus it cried to him:

"I—will bear that Message, and I will speak that Pardon!"

But the Angel looked sadly at the young, passionate face. And the child's eyes fell abashed before the glory of that gaze, and he fell on his knees, crying: "Surely it is God Himself!"

But the Angel said: "Nay, child, I am not God. But one of His ministers, who from time to time He sends to bear a message to this cold and callous earth. And who art thou?"

And the boy trembled greatly. And he said: "I am no one, and nothing, O mighty Angel, save a human weed flung here by the great sea. I love it—and it fills me with strange desires!"

Then said the Angel: "I know thy desires, and they shall be fulfilled. For it is the strength of his desire that makes man akin to God, and by reason of that kinship forces him to create even at cost of suffering for the thing created! Listen, thou small human soul! Listen and heed my words. For this thy soul shall grow and its dreams shall be divine; yea, the world shall sound thy

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praise. But in the hour of thy glory shall sound the voice of thy doom. Yet in that hour thou mayest save thy soul by repentance and by reparation. For of the sea is thy kingdom, and its pride, and its power, and its longing are in thy blood."

The child hid his face and trembled greatly. He murmured prayers—the feeble prayers of a child's faith in the Unknown and Unrealizable.

Darkness grew apace; the spray from the surging waves was as a baptism of tears upon his bent head. Then in fear and wonder he looked upwards once again. But there was no figure on the Mount. The Cross alone showed itself against the evening sky.

Then a great awe shook the boy's young soul, and he knew that he had seen a vision. What its portent or its meaning he could not tell. Had he slept and dreamed of the mighty Angel, or seen him in that waking moment when life reclaims the brain power sleep has stolen?

He rose and stood upright: a little fisher lad, poorly dressed, ill-nourished, his bare feet blue and cold upon the sea-wet rocks. He rubbed his eyes with small, chilled hands. He looked out and away to the vast width of waters, and then to the cross-crowned promontory.

A terrible loneliness and a terrible solemnity held the hour and the place. The scouts of the wind were for once at rest, and neither wings nor voices gave sign of life. A single star shone from out the dusky sky; the pale, clear gold of the moon showed between dividing clouds. The foam became a belt of moving white, encircling the Mount with soft protection.

The boy shivered, and stumbled downwards to the water's edge. There a small boat was moored to a broken arm of the rock. He loosed the rope and got into the boat, and rowed himself across to the mainland, going warily through a narrow channel, where the rocks went down into deeper water and the waves were fraying themselves into foam. He rowed on for an hour or more. Then he came to a rough landing-stage where other boats were lying in safe moorage against the rising tide. He sprang out, and fastened the towing-rope securely and laid the oars in their place. For a long moment he stood and

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gazed at the shadowy Mount rising afar from out the moon-lit sea.

"Was it a dream?" he whispered—"or a vision? Did I see the great Archangel and answer to his call? If so, I am his servant, and God's—for all my life."

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THE boy turned and went up a rough stone quay, and across broken extremities of land. Finally he stumbled up the cliff and into a narrow street of cottages. Some were closed to the chill Atlantic air, and of some the doors stood open, showing gleams of firelight or candlelight against the outer gloom. Before one door the little fisher lad stood and gazed within; a smile on his lips as he stood, unseen by the inmates. An old man sat by the fire. On a small wooden table by his side lay an open book, a large, heavy, leather-covered book—the Book of all books. To the reader it had been the friend and solace of his life for nearly seventy years.

Seated on a stool at his feet was a girl of some twelve or thirteen years of age. She was knitting a grey worsted stocking, and listening to the voice of the old man as he read. The boy beside the door listened also.

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea."

The old man paused and looked upwards, as if the vision of the Sacred Word stood revealed to himself. The girl had let the knitting slip from her fingers, and was looking up at his face with rapt and tender eyes.

"Be it *trew*, grandfather?" she asked softly. "Be it all *trew* as it's writ *there*?"

The dim eyes looked sternly down at the little questioning face. To doubt one word of the Holy Book meant to him a crime unpardonable.

"It be *trew* as Heaven—as God Himself! Who've been putting doubts into thy head, child?"

"No one, grandfather; no one. Only the questions come—I dunno how."

"What questions?"

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"About how it cum to be first written? And the beginning of everything? And what 'ud happen if there be'ant no truth in it? *How du 'ee know it be trew, grand-father?*"

The old zealot looked down at the child. He did not see another face as eager in its questioning; other eyes as burning in their appeal. He did not see the little lad crouched on the threshold; all a strained and listening nerve echoing that simple question.

"How du—I *know?*" fell slowly from the old man's lips. "I cannot say how I du know—but it *came*, and I've heid tu it all my life, and it will go with me to the gates of Death itself. To the gates of Death—and Beyond—so please Almighty God."

He bowed his head in prayer, and the child knelt at his knee. The little lad sprang suddenly from the doorway, and threw himself beside her. The old man laid a hand on each bent head, and his heart went out on a wave of thanksgiving and of faith. He asked for little. He gave thanks for much. In simple, homely speech he told his Maker of his simple needs and his spiritual shortcomings. Then his voice ceased. The children rose, and stood there hand in hand before him. But on the boy's face was a light so rapt and wonderful that the old man questioned it.

"You've seen another vision, David?" he asked.

"Yes, Mr. Pascoe," answered the boy timidly.

"Tell us of it."

And standing there before them, the firelight shining on the gold of his hair, the lad told of the vision of the Mount and the words that the Angel had spoken.

When he ceased there was a tense, strange silence—a silence through which straying echoes of the sea rose and fell in a never-ending plaint. And through the plaint and the song the boy seemed to hear again that wondrous thrilling voice: "Thy dreams shall be divine, and the world shall sound thy praise." That splendid prophecy lingered in his memory to the exclusion of its Fate.

"The world shall sound thy praise!" He looked at the wondering face of the girl, at the stern eyes of the old

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zealot. He looked round the small, homely room with its scanty furnishing.

This little cottage, the simple fisher folk, the hard and toilsome life—these were all he knew of life, or of the world. What had they to teach him that spelt greatness or renown? What golden lever should he find here to uplift him to fame such as his burning soul had coveted ever since it had tasted the bitter fruit of knowledge?

The grinding wheels of poverty had done their best to crush out ambition in all the lives around. His life was cast in the same mould. How was it to break the mould, and efface its impress, and build itself afresh in a freer and bolder pattern?

He dared not question Zachariah Pascoe. He feared his stern rebuke. He only stood in silence, awaiting the interpretation of his vision, even as of old the Eastern king waited on the words of his boy captive. But for once Zachariah Pascoe did not interpret. For once he read a human soul aright, and recognized the zeal of the Fanatic. He looked at the open page of the Great Book. He saw again the words which his grandchild had questioned.

Were they true?

Was this vision true? Were human life and spiritual life true, or did man but dream of some great Future impossible to reach, and impossible to realize?

He closed the Book. The children followed the gesture with wondering eyes. They had been used to hear it as answer to every question of Life. Why was it silent now?

"Go," he said suddenly to the little lad. "Get thee home with thyself, David. It is late. They will be anxious for thee."

The boy made no reply. He turned and went to the door, followed by the wistful eyes of the little girl. His home was at the end of the queer, straggling street. Here he had lived ever since he could remember life. The fisherman and his wife whom he called parents were only so by adoption. He had been picked up after one of the fierce storms for which that coast was famed. He had been fastened to a spar, and the sea in mercy for his

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helplessness had tossed him up on a stretch of sandy beach that formed a cove near the fishing village of Poltreath.

The man who had found the spar and its strange freight was a rough, kindly Cornishman. He had been married many years and had no family. He brought the child home to his wife and she readily accepted the sea's gift as Nature's, and loved and tended the little waif as though he had been her own.

But as soon as the child could speak and walk his natural instincts set themselves against his surroundings. True, he loved the sea, and was more at home in it and on it than on dry land. But his eyes were the eyes of the mystic, and his tongue spurned the rude dialect of his companions. He made friends with none of them. He learnt to read and write from the old minister of the parish church. He borrowed his books, and read them from cover to cover what time the rough fisher lads were catching pollock or pilchards, or idling on the shingle among the nets and boats.

Queer enough books for a child's reading they were! Volumes of sermons; works on orthodox theology; the history of John Wesley and his compeers; the "Pilgrim's Progress," and a well-worn, deeply treasured Shakespeare.

The Rev. Caleb Crouch was a native of Truro, and had come to the little hamlet of Poltreath when quite a young man. He was now some sixty years of age. A dreamy, placid, scholarly man of the old school of ministry treading in well-worn paths of safety, and armed with platitudes against all the vicissitudes of life. He had never married. He lived alone in a tumble-down old house within a stone's throw of the little church. An ancient housekeeper attended to his wants, and ruled him as efficiently and unceremoniously as any wife could have done. Like every one in the place, he loved the pretty castaway whom the sea had brought thither. Loved him all the more as each year gave proof of his abilities. His college classics were again in requisition, and his own brains had to be furnished up in order to keep pace with another intelligence; one demanding more than he could well supply.

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Such had been young David's life until the momentous eve when he had beheld that wondrous vision on the Mount. It was not the first time he had dreamt strange dreams and seen strange visions. Night and the sea were peopled for him by beings of another world; eloquent with a language to which the ears around seemed deaf. He had spoken of what he saw and heard to his adopted father and mother. But they only scoffed and scolded. No untrained intelligence can believe in more than it comprehends. And the words and dreams of the little lad were as an unknown language to the rough fisherman and his wife.

On that night of the Vision they were sitting by the fire, discussing him and his strange ways. He entered with that radiance and wonder still in his eyes and in his smile of greeting. Rebuke died off their tongues as they looked at him. They only murmured something of the lateness of the hour, and asked where he had been.

"On the sea," he answered.

"Thee'm too much on the sea, my dear life," said Rachel Perryn. "Why, 'twas noon when 'ee left 'ere, and now 'tes gone nine."

The boy said no more. Only drew up his chair to the wooden table where his supper was laid, and began to eat coarse bread and Cornish pasty with the healthy appetite of his age.

"We'm tired o' waitin'," observed the fisherman. "Mother an' I've tuk our supper hours ago."

He looked proudly and fondly at the bright face. This boy was the apple of his eye. But all the same he stood somewhat in awe of him. He could not understand his strange ways, his refined speech, the delicacy and cleanliness of his habits. He seemed made of finer clay, he seemed to move in a rarer atmosphere than those about him. Had he been his own child he would have felt it his duty to punish such vagaries and insubordination as his conduct of to-day. But every year and every month brought more clearly home to him the fact that no tie bound this sea waif to his home or his heart; that he was free to choose his life if he desired; to roam where he would and love whom he pleased.

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Absence of affection was a striking characteristic of David's. He was gentle and courteous by instinct, but never had he shown any sentiment approaching love for either of his adopted parents. He took their care and interest as a matter of course; he gave them as much obedience as seemed needful; but an invincible hatred of coercion had early made itself visible in his character. Freedom of life, freedom of action, freedom of thought seemed as necessary to him as air and sunshine. When it came to a conflict of wills he ceased arguments, but all the same he did what he had wished to do, whatever punishment awaited him afterwards. This long absence to-day was against all rule. A year before and he would have expected, and possibly received, a sound thrashing or been sent supperless to bed. Now—on the twelfth anniversary of his adoption—they had sat up, in aggrieved loneliness, angry at his absence and forgetfulness, but afraid to upbraid him when he came. He looked so young and radiant, so full of life and beauty, he was so much a wonder and delight to this childless pair that his mere presence made excuse for all else. They watched him eat his simple meal and drink the clear spring-water, which was the only beverage he ever touched. Even the way he ate and drank seemed a gracious condescension, and formed part of the picturesque attitude he took towards all duties and obligations of life.

When he had finished, the good Cornish woman put aside his plate and glass and the remains of the pasty for whose manufacture she was famous. Then she brought the great Bible from its place on the stone window-sill and placed it on the table. The fisherman opened it to read the usual evening chapter when the boy sprang from his seat, his face aglow, his eyes eager, and filled with that strange light they already knew and feared.

"Wait, father!" he cried. "This is the day you call my birthday. Let me choose the chapter to-night?"

He came up and laid his hand on the Bible, and looked David Perryn in the eyes. The man shrank back as if in awe. Without a word he rose from his seat and took the place beside his wife. With neither thanks nor explanation the boy turned the leaves rapidly; paused,

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read a verse, and looked up. His lips moved as if in prayer.

Then, with one hand on the open page, he stood upright, and in clear, ringing tones he preached his first sermon.

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IT was a strange scene.

The rough fisherman ; the homely figure of his wife ; and that boy preacher standing by the table, the lamp-light on his rapt face and shining eyes.

With never a pause for word or phrase he spoke on till some fifteen minutes had passed ; spoke as one inspired ; with a vivid imagery, a nervous force little short of marvellous in one so young. Then he ceased and closed the Book, and with a murmured "Good night" he left the room and went away up the wooden stairway to the tiny loft where he slept.

David and Rachel Perryn looked at each other as if questioning the reality of what had occurred. Astonishment and an inexpressible fear bound their limited speech and left them stranded on the shores of emotion. To the woman tears came as a natural relief, but the man felt as if he would choke.

"Did 'ee ever ? Sure, I'm mazed wi' wonder !"

"That child be a chosen vessel," said the woman, drying her eyes on her apron. "Even as Samuel was called, so he'm been called of Heaven. Not for naught did the sea cast him up, or ye ha' the finding of him. An' the name we gave him, 'tes that of the Lord's anointed."

"Tes my name, an' my vather's afore me."

"Iss fay ; but ye'm always called Davy, an' it seems more nat'ral. But twarn't in me to call the little 'un save by the name as Holy Scripture prints it."

They rose, and the man turned over the leaves of the ancient Bible as if questioning a new purpose.

"Do 'ee mind the place ov the text ?" he asked.

"He never said—just opened like and looked. Th' words be ringin' in my ears : 'Behold the man whose name is THE BRANCH, and he shall grow up out of his place.'"

CALVARY

"Out of his place?" repeated David Perryn. "Be that meanin' as this warn't th' lad's place by rights of birth?"

"Put the Book aside," said his wife. "The lad's 'ad a call, and we must stand aloof. He'll be no fisher like theeself, Davy. A fisher of men maybe, for the Lord Himself has called him."

"We mun lose him ef 'tes so, wife?"

"Iss, Davy. We mun let 'un go his way, seein' 'tes God Almighty's will. I reckon we'd best go to Minister Crouch to-morrow, and tell 'un of this. 'Twas mortal strange."

"Those dreams 'ee's told us of, Rachel, maybe they'm speretual, after all? We'd no call to mock at 'em, as we've done. The Lord forgive us if we've sinned."

"'Twas natural enuf we wanted to keep 'un to ourselves."

"But 'tes not to be," said the fisherman.

"No, Davy—'tes not to be."

They put out the lamp and went to their own resting-place, but little sleep visited their eyes. Natural human affection does not take kindly to uprooting. And it had always seemed a natural thing to this simple pair that the child of their adoption should follow the calling of his adopted father, and inherit the boat and nets and cottage in due time as others and more authentic Perryns had inherited them.

Besides, the lad was a true child of the sea. From earliest years he could swim and dive and fish, and manage oar and sail as if fisherman's blood was in his veins; a fisher's life his natural future. Yet now they came to think of it, they recalled a difference in his love of the sea and their own. It meant more, it said more, it *held* more for the little lad whose life it had spared, and whose cradle it had been. He had spoken of it as if it were a living friend, as if its moods and passions, and smiles and plaints, were not mere sounds. He knew its voice as they did not know it, and read its threats or promises more accurately than experience had taught them to read such things. The child and the sea were united by an indissoluble tie. David loved it better than his human friends; and there was no fear in his love—only

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a great longing and a great desire. For the unfathomable mystery of the ocean tempted him strangely. Tempted him to question its origin and its force, its meaning and its secret. *Something* it held; that ever-murmuring, ever-restless monster. Something given it in the Beginning, and, like that Beginning, a mystery that man could never explain.

With an irresistible will and a power that gods might envy, it yet was forced to acknowledge a Will *more* irresistible, a Power more powerful. Though it smiled, or frowned, or raged, or dashed itself to dust upon the adamantine cliffs, it always seemed to utter the wail of a prisoned soul. It was always a Lament and a Desire. Chaos was in its song, and every pulsing wave seemed instinct with rebellious life. Chained, prisoned, defiant, a thunder of unseen forces, a threat of unknown doom, so it rolled and raged, and smiled and sang for the young strange life it had once spared, and now inspired.

The first light of day shining through his tiny window would call David to look at the sea and taste its breath. There it lay. A wide, shining loveliness in the summer dawns; a seething mass of foam-crested billows when winter gales held revel on that wild coast. But at all and every season it held a charm of its own such as the land never possessed. The shifting colours, the swirling currents, the shadows of the great rocks, the cry of the restless birds resting in rough crannies, or whirling and wheeling over the crested waves—these were eloquent of some deeper meaning than touched the dull senses of the fisher folk.

He had at first tried to tell them of it. But he only met with mockery. The sea was the sea—a thing of power and of danger, also a provider of their livelihood—that was all. What did they heed of that mystery of chained force which for ever troubled the dreaming boy? What could they see in the waters that Creation had set around the earth save that it *was* water, and held in itself both food and destruction; a purpose and a danger? For the beauty in its changeful face and the melody of its plaintive voice they cared nothing. But the child David cared for these things above all else.

CALVARY

Never did he weary in the rocking arms of his first cradle; never had he feared the anger of storm, or the threat of raging waters. He seemed to bear a charmed life, for no harm ever came to him, despite his recklessness and daring. His little boat, a small but well-made craft, the gift of the fisherman Davy Perry, bore him hither and thither like a fairy vessel. He rowed or sailed it with a skill that Nature had taught. He lived in it all the long summer days, exploring the coves around, and landing where the fancy took him. Sometimes he fished with a small and serviceable net he had helped to make in those long winter evenings when the fisher folk kept to their cottages perforce, and howling winds and lashing waves made the coast a place of terror. Shipwrecks were not unfrequent there, and many a barque or brig met its fate upon those cruel rocks. Never a soul had been saved to David's knowledge. Dead men and fair women, and sometimes a little child, were cast up by the sea to the land. To him they had always looked calm and happy, as if in accepting their fate they had also accepted a gift of deeper meaning; a gift of the sea, a hint of its mystery and its doom.

The dawn broke red and fair that day after David's vision. The sun shone through his tiny lattice, and the sea called from its harbourage below the cliffs.

He sprang up. His golden curls fell over his eyes, and he tossed them impatiently aside and went to the little square lattice that stood open to winds and sun the summer through. His first thought, his first glance, whenever he awoke were given to the sea. It never wore the same face twice, or so he thought. There was always some subtle change or variety in its aspect. His eyes swept the sky, and read its portent of fine weather. He washed and dressed, and for a space knelt by the open window, letting his thoughts stray into what channel they pleased. Such straying and pure thankfulness for life meant always his morning prayer. Then he rose and went down into the one small living-room of the cottage.

He cut himself a thick slice of bread and drank his usual draught of spring water, and then went out. Nothing

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stirred as yet in the cottages or on the quay. There had been heavy spoils of late, and the fishermen were well content to rest on their good fortune.

From the cliff a steep path wound down to the sea; the path by which the boy had ascended the previous night. At its foot his little boat was moored. The tide was lifting it now. He looked down, reading invitation in those graceful, swaying movements. Then once more his eager gaze swept outwards to where that ever-memorable landmark reared its crest. It was not visible from here. The violet mists of morning still wreathed it in mystery. The boy turned abruptly, and prepared to descend the cliff. Just then a voice called his name.

He looked up and saw a small figure hastening towards him. It was the little granddaughter of old Zachariah Pascoe.

He waited and she ran to his side, panting and rosy. "Oh, David—how early you are! Are you going in your boat? Will you take me?"

"Of course," he said. "Only I can't promise to bring you back by breakfast-time."

"No matter. I've laid it ready for gran'vather and lit the fire. He'll know I'm gone to th' sea."

"Come along, then," said the boy, and he hastened down the rough path, leaving her to follow.

They had been playmates and companions all their young lives, he and Ruth Pascoe. It was no new thing for them to spend hours on the sea, or on the cliffs, sharing their simple meals and happy enough in each other's company. In both ran the same visionary strain; that mingling of Biblical facts and natural application of those facts which is by no means uncommon to the inhabitants of Cornwall. There is a simplicity of nature and a profound sense of religion about these people that date from ante-Nonconformist times. Possibly their land lends itself to faith as to superstition. Possibly the dangers of their coast and the precarious nature of their trade, both by land and sea, have wrought a natural acceptance of peril as of hardship. The Bible is in every home, and its words come as familiar sayings to most lips, mingling with the homely phrases and usages of their common life, and

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leavened by a simplicity and ignorance that join in with the proverbial honesty of the Cornish character.

Chapels are numerous and sects are many. The familiar picture of John Wesley preaching at Gwennap Pit is a picture reproduced by fitful frenzies of evangelizing, and sensational outbursts of missionary zeal. A wave of spiritual fanaticism spreads from time to time over the little townships and scattered hamlets. Sometimes a "Call" is professed by some illiterate miner or inspired fisherman. Then he feels it is his mission to preach, and according to his powers, or his novelty, so is his congregation.

To old Zachariah Pascoe, grandfather of little Ruth, such a call had come when he was advanced in years. He had entered the Nonconformist order, and taken over the tiny chapel of Poltreath by election. He was counted a second Wesley, so fervent was his expounding of the Sacred Word, so unsparing his condemnation of sinners, however tempted or however weak.

Little Ruth was about the same age as David. She had lived in this atmosphere of austerity and piety ever since her orphaned condition left the old zealot's cottage as her only home. She performed all the services possible to her young hands and willing heart. She had learnt to cook and sew, and she kept the little cottage as clean and fresh as her own life. She loved the old man dearly, and he was very good to her. True, that his calling kept him much occupied, and often meant hours of silence and absorption, or days during which he would absent himself and walk the country round, his staff in his hand, his old worn Testament in his pocket, reading, brooding, sometimes even preaching, if the Spirit moved him to do so.

To David, Ruth was less a companion than a solace—some one who loved him and understood him, and to whom he could talk as he pleased, and tell what he chose. She worshipped him with a passionate devotion: the devotion of a lonely childhood thrown upon itself, and denied all natural outlet for its feelings. When she could get away and be with David she was perfectly happy. But of late he had seemed to shun her society. He would be out and away before she could get through her domestic

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duties, or he would tell her that the sea was too rough, or the place he was going to too far for her to accompany him. It hurt her deeply, though she made no complaint. But on this August morning she had resolved to go with him, and waking with the dawn had succeeded in her design.

The boy loosed the boat with practised hand, and taking the oars sent the little craft out of its sheltering cove and over the wide rolling swell of the Atlantic. Soon he paused, and resting on his oars looked over the golden width of waters.

The Mount was visible now; a tall, conical shape rising from the sea, as the Pyramid from the desert. A noble, wonderful thing, wholly worthy of its legend and its name.

The girl followed the boy's long gaze, and read his thoughts by memory of that related vision. She did not speak. She had learnt to know of masculine signs and moods that imposed silence on the feminine tongue. She was very meek and very patient, this little Ruth. With a sigh, David at last turned and took up the oars again.

"Are you going—*there*?" asked Ruth eagerly.

He shook his head and turned the boat somewhat sharply. The shore curved amongst outrunning rocks and frowning caverns. The boy rowed steadily on, sending the light craft on its mission with strong, sweeping strokes. Ruth watched him silently, wondering as she had always wondered at his strange beauty; at the poise of head and curl of lip, at once defiant and compelling; at the gold of his hair, and the velvety darkness of his eyes. Never had she seen eyes of that colour: a deep, intense violet that looked black at night or under the influence of emotion; eyes with something of the pansy's purple softness set in a clear white iris, almost startling by contrast. The delicate brows and sweeping lashes were almost girlish in their beauty. In fact, the feminine type was more apparent in the boy's physique than the masculine, its only contradiction the boldness of the brow and the curl of the upper lip.

Ruth's mere childish prettiness looked commonplace beside David. Hence perhaps her adoring admiration of him. She had waited on his moods and confidences ever since

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their acquaintance began, and he still seemed to her a being of another sphere in comparison with the fisher lads of the village.

When David again ceased rowing they were close to one of those fairy coves with which the coast abounded. He sent the boat high and dry upon a stretch of firm sand. Then he sprang out, and helped Ruth to do the same. She looked around with some curiosity; she had not been here before. Her eyes noted a caverned recess, half hidden by ferns and coarse sea-grasses. The sand on which she stood was powdered with delicate shells. The cliff shelved upwards by a rough, broken path, and to the left of the summit were the remains of an ancient tower which legend reported as a haunted spot. Her questioning glance sought David. Why were they here? Was it to be a picnic, or an exploration, or a discovery of some new wonder?

The boy was looking at the cavern's entrance. She wondered if he expected to see something or some one issue from thence. While they waited a voice suddenly rang out on the silence. A man's full, rich voice chanting what might have been a pagan hymn to the God of Day, so joyous was the strain, so simple the melody. A sudden rapture shone in David's face. "He *is* here—still!" he said.

The little girl crept closer to his side.

"Who is it?" she whispered.

He glanced at her with a sort of impatience. "I forgot you. I hope he won't mind," he answered.

Almost on his words the fern-curtains were swept aside and the figure of a man stood in the entrance. He was oddly dressed; long, dark hair blew loose about a tanned, olive-skinned face—the face of one to whom wind and weather are natural friends. It was a clean-shaven face, showing a beautiful mouth and white, even teeth; a mouth that laughed for the joy of laughter, though the deep brown eyes held something of the sorrows of life.

When he saw the children he came out and greeted them with a smile that held all the joy and welcome of the day itself.

"So it's you, my young Dreamer! And who is this?"

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Your sister ? No—I remember you told me you possessed no relatives. Well, no matter. She is a friend of yours ; her best introduction."

He swept his slouched hat to the ground in mocking salutation of sex.

"Now you are here," he said, "you must join me at breakfast. It is true I have to find the breakfast first, but perhaps the sea will be kind. Have you a net, my young Samuel ?"

"No—I did not bring one to-day," said David regretfully.

"An oversight ; but no matter. I have one of my own in the cave. Fetch it, and we'll try our luck."

The boy ran into the cavern as if well used to such commands.

Little Ruth, too amazed for speech, gazed open-mouthed at this strange being. Tall, dark, supple, dressed only in a woollen shirt of dull scarlet and loose serge trousers such as seamen wear, he yet had an air of command—a regal ease that set him miles away from any experience of her own. She could find nothing to say, nor could she hide her bewilderment. He read it all. The childish soul was like an open book. He laughed again.

"Why, how you stare, my little maid ! Am I so strange an object-lesson ? What would you say were I unshorn and unshaved, and my beard tangled with my hair, as indeed wise Nature meant all beards should be—to save trouble ?"

Still she looked and listened, her whole soul lost in wonder. Then David came out of the cavern dragging a brown fishing-net behind him. The stranger seized it and threw it into the boat, and sprang in after it.

"Wait you here," he called as the water splashed on either side at his impetuous launching. "Make the fire in the old place, David, and spread the feast on the rock yonder."

The boat shot off, and they saw him cast his net in the deep sea beyond.

The boy wasted no time. He gathered sticks and dry weed and made a pile of them just beside the mouth of the cave. He went within and brought out some rough,

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tarred logs and placed them cautiously on top of the pile. Then he took a strange triangle of iron and set it over the fire, and hung a kettle from its hook. Ruth watched him in ever-renewed amazement. At last she ventured to the cave and looked within. She saw a wide rock-walled space curiously light, although there seemed no aperture for light to enter. In one corner a pile of grass and sea-drift was heaped upon the sandy flooring. Some loose garments lay upon the primitive bed; a travelling wallet and stout stick kept them company.

David produced some tin plates and cups from a recess that formed a natural cupboard. Here, too, was a loaf of bread and a cannister of tea and an earthenware teapot. All these articles he brought out and laid them on a slab of rock near the fire. Ruth trotted after him, and found her tongue at last.

"Who'm be he? A pirate king or a smuggler, David?" she asked.

The boy laughed. "A king perhaps, but no pirate, and no smuggler. I found him here one day, and he told me to come again—and I have come; that is all I know. But he is the most wonderful man in all the world, I think. He knows everything; he has been everywhere. When he speaks you wish he would never cease, for you can never tire of hearing him. When he sings, one feels that Heaven is near and all God's angels watching us. But you will hear, you will see. He is coming back already. Listen!"

The two young eager faces turned again to the sea. The net had been drawn in; the boat was coming back. And over the golden waters rang the triumphant song of the "*Pescatori*," as it is sung in Naples, as it is sung in Brittany, as it is sung wherever the shoals are plentiful and the nets well filled. But to the children it was new in its pagan joy and revelry of sound; it seemed less a note of praise than of conquest; the vainglory of a victor who has wrested his spoil from Death, not the thanksgiving of a grateful soul for the bounty of Creation.

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THE man leaped from the boat and dragged it to the beach. He tossed the living, quivering creatures he had caught into a wicker creel and brought them to where the fire was blazing. He made short work of preparation ; scaled and cleaned and opened the fish, and spitted them on sticks before the flame. Then he made tea in the earthen pot and cut the bread into thick slices, and told David of a hidden store of butter and sugar within the cave.

"Spoils gathered from the last market-day yonder," he explained. "I gave some help to an old dame whose donkey had proved more incorrigibly lazy than even Cornish donkeys do prove at fairs and market times. Having some trick of management with animals, I drove him and the old dame to their very door. In gratitude she insisted I should take some of her own home-made butter and a trifle of tea and sugar for my empty larder. I take it that service rendered need not quibble at service paid. Hence our well-spread board to-day. I had not expected guests, but that makes them the more welcome and the spoils more opportune."

While he spoke he was never idle. It seemed to Ruth that he was the personification of restlessness. Life quivered in every motion, look, and gesture, as if it were an impatient fire for ever on the point of breaking its restraints. He was as vivid a force as the morning itself ; as restless and magnetic as the sea. And surely all the melody of earth and sea were in his voice, whether he spoke or sang—or thus it seemed to the wondering child.

When the fish was cooked he served it up on one of the tin plates, brown and delicious, with the flavour of the sea in every mouthful. The tea he drank himself, for David touched nothing but water, and Ruth could not

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take the strong, fragrant fluid without milk. She was filled with curiosity as to who this strange being could be, and why he should live in a cave. Of that he spoke in his whimsical fashion between the emptying and filling of those innumerable cups of tea.

"I have had notice to quit my castle," he told David. "It appears that a man cannot locate himself in even so undesirable a habitation without some transgression of law. In the present instance those rights are concerned with a surly curmudgeon yonder who is an owner of land, and by courtesy the Squire of Trebarwick. His lands go down to the sea, and this cave comes within their boundary. I was warned off as trespasser last night, and by mere subterfuge won a last lodging there."

He nodded in the direction of the cavern. "So it is well you chanced to come this morning, my young Samuel, or you would have found this spot as tenantless as when I first discovered it."

Ruth looked quickly at the speaker. "You haven't lived here always, then?"

"No, my guileless maiden; only for some seven days at most. Hasn't your young friend told you of our meeting?"

"No," she said. "I didn't know where he was bringing me to-day."

"So much the better. The only pleasures of life are its surprises; and they become rarer with life's progression. But why this secrecy, my infant Samuel? You surely did not place me amongst the Heavenly visitants who call you from your slumbers, or await you on that Archangel's Mount at which you gaze so reverently?"

The boy started.

"I never said——"

"No, my young visionary, you never *said*. I think in your inmost heart you registered a vow that you would never tell me of another vision or another dream. But there has been—another?"

He looked keenly into the young face that paled and flushed beneath his mocking scrutiny. As if compelled to speak despite unwillingness, the boy faltered. "Yes—there was another."

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"The same, or different?"

"Altogether different. I saw the Archangel himself upon the Mount."

A flash of angry light shot from the dark eyes of the questioner. The scorn of his laugh was like a lash across the boy's sensitive heart. He sprang to his feet. "Ah, don't laugh!" he cried in a passion of entreaty. "It hurts!"

For a moment the man said nothing, only his face grew strangely soft. "Poor infant Samuel," he said. "Does it hurt? Is your soul so tender a thing? Well, tell me the vision. Tell me all. I promise I will not laugh—again."

"I lay at the foot of the Mount and looked up to Heaven. And as I looked I saw a golden pathway spread from thence, and there descended a Figure. He bore a sword in one outstretched hand, and he stood upon the summit of the Mount and looked out at the sea. Long and silently he looked, and I heard it tremble and shiver against the rocks, and its voice held a note of fear. Then the great Angel spoke to the sea and called it 'rebel.' Yet he blessed it for its services to man. And from the sea he looked to the earth. Accursed he called it. Accursed by man's sin, but by man to be redeemed——"

The boy's voice broke, for his eyes had turned to that strange mocking face of his listener. But there was no mockery in it now; only a great sadness and an infinite despair.

"Go on," he said in a husky whisper.

Then the boy related the end of the vision. How, moved by some overwhelming impulse, he had sprung to his feet and, face to face with that glorious Being, had vowed himself his messenger. He told of the Archangel's answer and of those closing words. They seemed burnt as with letters of fire upon his memory. To repeat them was to see them. Glowing, fervid; a prophecy and a prediction; clear as the Writing on the Wall that shone before Belshazzar of Babylon.

The stranger heard him to the end. And when the boy's appealing glance asked response it met such wondering gentleness that the ready tears sprang to his eyes. "Ah! you *do* believe—at last!"

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"I believe that to you such things are real. Have I not called you a second Samuel; a seer of visions, a dreamer of dreams? It is not difficult to prophesy your future. To the visionary of every age such things have happened. Miracles are not chained to one epoch of the world's history. They are as possible to-day as in past centuries. Only we who realize them have lost belief. What is untrue or impossible to us *now* will only be accounted truth a century hence! Have I not told you that as a grain of sand to the wide shore, as a drop of water to the mighty ocean, so is the soul of man to the great plan of Infinitude? Not to one *alone*, but to all Humanity in *One*, comes the fulfilment of man's Destiny. The souls that have been and the souls yet to be, the lives accursed and the lives acclaimed as sainthood, all these but work together for one Inscrutable Purpose. Each puny soul that swells and struts in miniature godhead, each futile monarchy boasting of its rights, each plaything of genius, used and abused and meeting but the common fate of human life, each foolish idol of beauty or of wealth or that sad thing called Fame, these one and all are but means to an end. The ultimate perfecting of what was created—Imperfect!"

"But was not man created perfect? Are we not told——"

The man smiled. "Told! *Who* told us? When Fable and Fact are bound together, when tradition stands for Truth, and convenience for Certainty, who is to believe in one record of the world's beginning more than in another! You have been taught narrow facts by narrow minds. You, like your teachers, are ready to accept without question what others have questioned without accepting. You are but a child, my young evangelist; but Nature, or your Creator, has dowered you with a spirit of faith in things unseen and unprovable. Well, I am a Doubter since the world began. I stand for rebel and for foe. I treat nothing—however sacred, or however orthodox—with that uncritical reverence which blesses the ignorant mind, and keeps it wrapped in cotton-wool contentment till the Gordian knot of life is cut for ever! Yet—I am the more sorry for myself. Theirs is the easier part.

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Through the bondage of a blind Belief they look out upon a limited sphere of self-promised bliss. You, child, are called to this blind orthodoxy. You—with cramped soul and limited intellect—dream of leading and converting other souls as cramped; other intellects as limited. The one slight difference between you will only be the difference of that subtle power marking off capacity from incapacity. We would all be great and glorious—if we could. We would emulate the power we envy had not some sterner power placed one man on the ladder of achievement while another halts helplessly on its first rung of Desire! . . . How you look! You do not understand me—yet. But you will, David—you will. I can read your future as though it were an open book lying before me on those sands! Have we not talked and walked and mocked together, or perchance 'twas I who mocked, and you who rebuked? Your soul is pure as yet, my young Samuel, and your record a spotless page in the great volume of life. But one day there will be a story to read in the book; perchance a blot upon the page!"

He rose suddenly and stood looking away over the sea; away to where the great Mount showed above the quiet waters. The boy followed his gaze. He rose also, and stood there in a silence born of incomprehension. That flood of bitter words had poured itself out to ears as yet deaf to heresies; to a mind as yet sealed in pure innocence, unharmed by doubt. The young eyes of the Dreamer looked away to the scene of his vision, and once again the words of that strange prophecy leapt out in letters of gold upon the translucent air.

It was Ruth's voice that recalled them both. Ruth, the patient listener whom they had forgotten.

"If you please, there be some one signing to you—up there above!"

She pointed to the cliff. A man was standing there and making signals. The stranger looked up. "Possibly that means my dismissal," he said. "I have outstayed the hour of respite in my zeal for you, David."

"The gentleman is coming down the path," said the boy.

"So he is. Well, I will wait for him. The rôle of messenger is always less dignified than that of intruder."

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He seated himself on the edge of the flat rock that had served as table. Ruth gathered the simple utensils together, and poured some water into a cup and began to wash them. In a few moments the newcomer was within speaking distance. He was a thin, ascetic-looking man dressed in rough tweeds and leather gaiters. His eyes were singularly piercing and direct. They took in the little group of trespassers with a rapid glance.

"So you are not gone yet? I am glad of that. I came here with an apology. Some officious keeper of mine has had the audacity to usurp my privilege of ejection. However, he so far exceeded his powers that he roused interest instead of indignation. I thought I would like to see for myself who had so strange a taste in residences as to choose a cave rather than a roofstead."

"I am that connoisseur in domiciles," said the stranger, with a mocking bow. "I am tramping this coast for my own pleasure, and I asked only a tramp's privilege—the gifts of Nature for sustenance, and the shelter of these sea caves for roof. I came upon this cave by happy chance, and for some nights it has sheltered me. But I've had my marching orders, and in a few moments I shall have quitted it, reserving my thanks for a grudging hospitality."

"You seem something of a character. And your voice and speech are certainly not those of the tramp your appearance emulates."

The man's gay laugh rang out like a challenge. "How well you read your fellow-man! And since you spoke of your keeper 'exceeding his duty,' may I in my turn inquire who has the—privilege—of ejection hereabouts?"

"As far as privilege goes, I may lay claim to that, seeing that this land is mine."

"You are the Squire of Trebarwick?"

"I have that honour."

"Do you count it an honour?" asked the man, with his whimsical smile. "Does it add a featherweight to your importance to be able to order me off your land?"

"Candidly it does not. Neither have I any intention of doing it. You are at liberty to occupy that cave as long as you choose to play the hermit. There are legends

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enough about such fools in these parts. Perhaps it's your ambition to achieve sainthood on similar lines?"

Again that rich and joyous laughter rang out, winning an unwilling smile from the saturnine lips of the Squire as response.

"Sainthood? That is not much in my line, nor was it in theirs to the best of my knowledge. Like greatness, it was thrust upon them by smaller minds."

The Squire looked at him with deepening interest. He could not but wonder at his strange appearance, or its contrast with his manners and his speech. Then his glance fell on the children.

"Not—yours?" he said.

"I have no human ties," was the answer. "I am a Wanderer without name: an Ishmael of parts, save only that it is my mind, and not my hand, that is set against man. I am at war intellectually with all the enormous mass of Humbug that has been crystallized by civilization into one solid lie! It is a magnificent lie, I grant, but—that makes it all the more terrible."

"You interest me greatly!" exclaimed the Squire. A curious glitter came into his eyes, and his thin face grew eager.

"Then there must be something in you besides land-grabber and feudal chieftain! For my part your domains are too insignificant to be worth a regret. I am not inclined to stay here, despite your permission. The fact of any permission coming into the matter does away with the charm of freedom. I shall go further afield, or rather a-sea. My young friend here will give me place in his boat, and you, Sir Squire, can relieve the mind of your excellent keeper as to my intentions on his rabbits. Not but what they make excellent pasties, those same rabbits, but they have been served to me as a *bona fide* traveller, not as a personal experiment."

"But why must you go?" demanded the Squire suddenly. "I have explained that you are welcome to your cavern as long as it pleases you to remain in it. Nay, more"—and his face grew yet more eager—"my house itself is at your service if you will be my guest. I am a lonely man. I have few pleasures save my books. If

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libraries interest you, then mine might well claim some spare hours. It boasts a collection rivalled by few."

"Books? My one temptation!" exclaimed the stranger. He looked searchingly at the giver of the invitation; then glanced at the sea, and from thence to the wondering faces of the two children. The Squire's eyes wandered also in that direction, and lingered in half-unwilling admiration on the beautiful face of David.

"I have seen you before, child," he said abruptly. "On the Mount, was it not?"

"I am often there," said David. "But I do not remember you."

"Possibly a mere mortal, and a landowner at that, would not come under the scope of your observation," said the man of the cavern. "You must know, sir, that our young friend there is no mere fisher lad. He is a Seer; a beholder of visions: poet by nature and preacher by instinct. Yonder Mount has taught him much. Not for nothing has an Archangel consecrated its memory. But I diverge. What I wish to say is that your offer of hospitality is less important than the fact of your possessing a library. Books are the one luxury I covet, and my life prohibits them as part of my baggage, which you may suppose is but light—and insignificant. When my shirt needs washing I wash it, and when it wears out I beg or borrow or work for another, as my mood takes me. For the rest, all climates are at my disposal. I can temper the rigour of one with the mildness of another. I own no city as birthplace, and no country as home. The air of Heaven is not more free than I, nor the birds of the air happier. For friends I have all the world of men and women, picking them out as I choose, and leaving them behind in my wanderings when I weary of them. I tell you this, Sir Squire, for fear you may repent of your rashness in throwing open your library to my greedy soul. But if you are not afraid of a vagabond who has faced the eternal verities, and owns no name save that of Wanderer, then that same vagabond accepts your offer in the spirit of its giver, and—for the nonce, remains here!"

He looked at the fern-curtained doorway of the cave, at the motley collection little Ruth had washed and put

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neatly together. Then he laughed softly. "It is too early yet to intrude upon your Squireship," he said. "Give me till noon with my young friends."

"One moment," said the Squire. "Was that truth or jest you spoke about this boy?"

"Truth—with the saving grace of my own translation. Had you but come a few moments sooner you would have been treated to a finer sermon than chapel or church could give you."

"I go to neither," said the Squire, with some contempt.

"If you knew aught of me, or of my name——"

"Ignorance on both points is my misfortune—as yet," interrupted the Wanderer, as he had called himself.

"Well, for name I am plain Morgan Craddock; an alien Cornishman, seeing that I inherit by the distaff side the property of a race who die out with my death. The house is old and ugly, and the lands are poor and the revenues small; but when they came to me I was grateful enough, and for twenty years I have given myself up to my hobby of book collecting. I don't know why I tell you this. I am not usually frank with strangers."

"Most men are frank with me," said the Wanderer. "And few—women," he added, with an odd little smile.

"Oh—women!" said the Squire contemptuously.

"Leave them out of our introduction! Marplots and marionettes! They serve some need of Nature, I suppose, but for sake of peace and sanity, I keep them out of my house!"

"I would do the same, had I a house to be master of!" laughed the Wanderer. "Yet they have some good points. Give them their due. But for Woman you and I would not be conversing together, nor would life suddenly show itself as a new interest for—one of us."

"Why not for both?" asked the Squire.

"Oh!" was the cool rejoinder. "Did you suppose that *my* interest was a personal matter?"

There was a moment's silence. Morgan Craddock seemed uncertain whether to resent a rudeness or condone an interest. But his hesitation was brief. "I could not flatter myself so far," he said. "But remember my house

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lies—there”—he pointed up the cliff—“and my library is at your disposal whenever you care to visit it.”

“You are kinder than I deserve, Sir Squire,” laughed the strange recipient of such unusual courtesies. “But in this mad whirligig we call life no man gets his deserts. Therefore let us part—in expectation.”

He took off his hat and bowed with that mocking courtesy which seemed a part of himself. The Squire returned it more unceremoniously, then turned and went slowly up the steep path.

David and Ruth looked questioningly at each other and then at the grave face of their new friend. He stood quite still, his eyes on the shining sea, his brows drawn together in a frown of perplexity. Then something—a bird, a wave, the rocking boat, caught his attention, and the old joyous mood returned.

“To the sea, to the sea!” he cried laughingly. “The day is young yet, and its hours are our own. David, you shall row—or stay—we will share that pleasure. And I will instruct you in my own theology. I have been to colleges, and forgotten more damnable falsehoods than you will ever learn. You would go to no seminary save that Dame Nature keeps if you were wise, my young Samuel. But—are you wise? Is any one?”

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IV

THE two children and their strange companion spent the morning on the water. Sometimes he talked, and they listened with rapt ears to his stories of the world; to vicissitudes and experiences more marvellous than any fairy tale or page of romance. Sometimes there would fall a long spell of silence. Then David's gaze would seek the blue depths of the sky, or the wonderful opal tints of the water. And the spell of their beauty, and the mystery of their meaning, would wrap him in strange content. The eyes of the Wanderer turned more than once to the spiritual beauty of that musing face. He had said he could read the boy's soul like an open book, but he could not read the thoughts of such moments, or follow that strain of mysticism through its perplexing maze.

When noon drew nigh he turned the boat towards the shore again. David's eyes questioned.

"Yes, I shall remain. A week—a month. I make no promise. But the chance of to-day does not often come to me. I have a feeling about that visitor of ours, David. He will play a part in both our lives. And interest is for me just the one thing that makes life worth living. I had expected none in this remote corner of the earth. Possibly that is why I found it."

"Then I may come and see you again?" said the boy eagerly.

"Every day, and all day, if it please you, Samuel! But I think we will dispense with Ruth. She has heard enough to fill every nook and cranny of her small human soul. Let her digest it. A plethora of unaccustomed food is unhealthy, and tends to ill consequences. Ruth had best sit at her needle or her spinning wheel—if such a thing still exists—and you shall come to me and hear wisdom and gain knowledge, which, after all, is the

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whole duty of man, even though it prove in the end but vanity and vexation of spirit."

"That," interposed Ruth proudly, "be a text; taken from th' Book of Ecclesiastus. Gran'vather preached from't the last Sabbath day but one."

"Is that so? I fancy I can hear that sermon. Were you present, my young seer?"

"No," said David. "I was at the church. Mr. Crouch teaches me, you know, and he likes me to come to his services."

"I imagine his discourses must be more edifying, even if they lack the primitive zeal of our Methodist friends! Have you ever seen a bunch of grapes, David?"

"Oh, yes! Mr. Crouch has a glass-house, and a vine grows within. It has covered all the walls and the roof. He is very proud of it."

"Well, that being so, I'll go on with my illustration. In a bunch of grapes there are small and large; sour and sweet. Yet all come from the same vine, the same stem. All have sprung from the same root, shared the same sunshine and received the same care. How do you account for the variations of size, or flavour? Does it not seem to mean that in Nature there is the same strain of perversity as marks human life. For, look you, mankind has formed a million varying patterns out of his primitive 'first father.' Be that *first* an evolution or a progression, or perfection ready-made as human vanity loves to believe, yet its variations seem endless. Take a small peninsula like this. There are more sects than I can count upon my fingers. And each clings to its own belief in its own righteousness, and holds itself as pattern of the mysterious revelations of God! Has it occurred to your young mind yet, my infant Samuel, to question the right or wrong of your chapel as set against your church? I see it hasn't. But it will; rest sure of that. The clash of creeds means the soul's first baptism of war. Be wary how you choose your commander, and on whose side you fight. Though for my part I hold one as bad as another, and all unsatisfactory."

"Do you not go to church, sir?" asked the boy timidly.

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creed as true, or any preaching as satisfactory. Error can only beget error. From one small *ephemera* has sprung a hydra-headed monster whose rapacity is insatiable, and whose crimes no man may count! Still, for sake of some small grain of good, some tender gift of charity, I would not denounce *all* as evil. It is not the thing itself that stands for error, but those who have worked it as an engine of mischief and a perverter of Truth. But stay on your oars a moment, David. Is not that roof we see above the trees Trebarwick House?"

"Yes," said the boy, who knew coast and cliff and every signal mark for miles around.

"What did you think of your suzerain? He owns your village yonder, you know, or so I was told. Shame that so many acres of goodly land fall to one man's ownership!"

"Does he own Poltreath as well as all—this?" exclaimed the boy wonderingly.

"I believe so. And he is not of the soil either, which makes it a double wrong. He was only a third-rate descendant; an accident of relationship. However, he interested me strangely. I go to further our acquaintanceship. You can pull me in to shore now, David, and then betake yourself to your own side of the bay."

With no more formal farewell than a smile and a hand-wave, he leapt ashore and shoved off the boat again.

But to David, as he turned homewards, it seemed as if the day had lost something of its brightness, and the sea of its charm. A strange regret filled its voice and echoed in his heart, and to Ruth and her prattle he gave but impatient rejoinder.

Meanwhile the strange being who had elected to be called "Wanderer" went up the rugged cliff path, and, throwing himself down on the thyme-scented grass, looked long and thoughtfully at the surrounding landscape. The granite formation of the soil left large tracts of bare country. Here and there groups of trees or a flash of green fields showed up against the numerous boulders and the strange stone fences. The house or hall of Trebarwick was shut in by granite walls topped by high hedges of *escallonia*. A sturdy gateway of stone blocks and

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carved moulding gave entrance to the garden. Over its centre stone the arms of the Trebarwicks were carved. Through the iron scroll-work of the gate a lawn and drive were visible. On either side were flower-beds set thick with hardy blossoms. All about stood huge bushes of fuchsia and tall geraniums, and golden rod and white rocket. Monthly roses climbed up the side of the windows, and ivy and creeping lichen covered the walls.

The Wanderer looked through the gate at all this wantonness of Nature; saw the palms and the cacti and the camellia shrubs as tributes to the humid air and sheltering walls around. It was a wonderful out-of-door display, and spoke well for the mildness of the climate.

He turned the heavy iron handle of the gate and entered. The house fronted a wide drive, and he saw his acquaintance of the morning sitting beside an open window, reading. At sound of the step two large deerhounds sprang up from the stone flags on which the long windows opened. They barked loudly, but not aggressively; then, to the Squire's surprise, they walked quietly up to the visitor and greeted him with stately friendliness. He patted their heads, and with one on either side strode to the window.

"It is no use setting the 'dogs of war' on me, Squire," he said. "They have too much sense for hostilities. I never met the animal yet who was not quicker at recognizing my harmlessness than were his two-legged superiors."

"I am pleased to welcome you," said Morgan Craddock.

"Will you come within, or do you prefer the garden?"

"The garden by all means to walk in, or talk in, or feed in; but I have come to see your library."

"Will you share my luncheon first? We were both astir early enough to make a meal desirable."

"I am no friend to formal meals, nor," he added, with a whimsical look at his costume, "am I exactly clad in the fashion of a guest for your table."

"Nonsense!" said Craddock impatiently. "We will have our meal under the mulberry tree yonder, and—if coats offend your sense of artistic fitness, I'll gladly adopt your costume. The day is hot enough to dispense with one."

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He threw off his own coat, and stood there in a loose shirt of white linen and the knickerbockers and leggings of the morning.

His guest looked at him critically. He was a slight man of average height, with the face of an ascetic and a somewhat cruel mouth. Just now his eyes were purposely inexpressive. He could make them so when it pleased him.

He turned suddenly, crossed the room, and rang a bell. A manservant appeared, and he gave him some rapid orders. Then he stepped out over the low window-sill and joined the waiting stranger.

"Come," he said, "I'll show you my garden. It is worth looking at, if only for its lavish tribute to inattention. It does so much for itself that I do little for it. I have only my own tastes to study. My neighbours don't trouble me now. They did at first, but when I wouldn't hunt, or shoot, or eat their heavy, late dinners or ask them to eat my light ones—well, they gave me up as a degenerate descendant of my race. And now I am a free agent!"

"A limited freedom. No man of property or possessions is ever free. It is vagabonds like myself who claim that privilege. The whole wide earth at their disposal, and not a gift of the gods to envy! Ah—that is fine!"

He stopped abruptly before a little glade, an opening between the trees which left the whole glittering width of the sea to view. Landwards spread the barren hills, and the irregular masses of volcanic stone which tradition has named and popularized under many a fancy title. The little cove where the Wanderer had domiciled himself was clearly visible below the cliffs, and further still, facing the southern headland, crouched a strange-shaped rock, like a sea monster asleep on the quiet waters.

For a moment neither of them spoke. Then the Squire said: "*That* did more to reconcile me to prosperity than anything else. I have gazed at it now for some twenty years and never wearied. See"—and he pointed to a rough stone bench—"I sit there, and Nature paints my picture afresh each day. No gallery I have ever seen owns so many, or such variety."

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"I grant it," said the Wanderer. "This would compensate for a great deal."

"Even the possession of a dining-room and a butler?" laughed Craddock. "I wish you would tell me something. Is your vagabondage a pose, or a necessity?"

"Neither," was the cool rejoinder. "I can't pose because I am too sincerely natural; and I bow to no necessity. I have escaped the compulsion that rules mankind. I can never be forced to do anything I do not choose to do."

Morgan Craddock was not easily surprised, but this announcement was too amazing for acceptance. "I confess that is a somewhat incredible statement," he said. "No one is fortunate enough to escape the trammels of humanity—if he claims its birthright. However strong be human will, it has to bow to a stronger force than its own sooner or later."

"I have recognized no such phase as yet."

"But—do you mean to say that in all the vicissitudes of life, in all that has befallen you, *your own will* has been supreme dictator?"

Again that whimsical smile flickered over the stranger's face. "I am not so mad as you think me," came the answer. "But you must remember that you sought my acquaintance—not I yours. And it is not my habit to give confidence, or answer questions. If you accept me as I am, you must accept my statements for what they are. Is that understood?"

A sudden colour came into the worn cheek of the Squire. "If I did not feel we were destined to know more of each other I might resent your reserve. But I am wise enough to recognize a personality when I meet it. To those who interest me I forgive all—save their interesting any one else—more. I was born jealous."

"A humiliating confession. My philosophy would suggest that the interest ceased with the supplanting. Emotions mean so little; ideas so much. In the struggle for supremacy we want enduring facts, not passing fancies."

"Do you consider interest, friendship, love as passing fancies?"

"They do pass, do they not? An interest is only new until a newer one crowds it out of one's thoughts. A

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friend is only satisfactory while he echoes our opinions and sympathizes with our hobbies. And love—" He paused. For a moment the eyes of the two men met in a long, steady gaze, that questioned and baffled questioning. "Love," continued the Wanderer, "is at once the meaning of life and its destruction. For to create is to destroy. Nature does it every day, every season of the year. What man worships as God has done it from the beginning—at least, what man calls the Beginning. It is not so really. It is only the end of a phase of experiments."

"I am glad we are at one on that point!" exclaimed Craddock eagerly. "You will find authorities and controversies enough to re-convert all Christendom in my library yonder."

"Christendom," said the stranger, "will never be converted into anything rational or satisfactory. It is a vessel for ever steered by ignorant pilots. Mind you, the pilots have a very accurate knowledge of the port. It is only the steering of which they are uncertain. You have given thought to the subject?"

"The greater portion of my life. I have written of it, too."

"A waste of time, my friend! Neither written nor spoken words can alter a conviction rooted in the rocks of Time, and cradled in the arms of Superstition. And, after all, there is no need to alter it—'re. There will be space and to spare for the remedy of errors and the confounding of sects in the Future."

"You grant—that?"

"I know it."

His face grew suddenly dark as if the shadow of some inward gloom had touched it. His eyes still rested on the lovely seascape—the opal tints of sky and sea. But they saw only the crouching defiance of that strange rock: a monster misshapen, and immovable as are the superstitions of man and the brutal forces of Nature.

Into the silence came the prosaic sound of preparation for the *al-fresco* meal the Squire had ordered. He touched the arm of the stranger.

"Come," he said, "let us waive discussions for the

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present. I shall lay no further claim upon you until we have broken bread as a pledge of friendship."

He led the way to where a rustic table stood laden with a simple meal. Cold meats, salad crisp and fresh, fruits luscious and glowing, heaped in a large Chelsea bowl as centre-piece and decoration; wine old and proved of years in wicker baskets; the green shade of boughs above, and the mossy softness of grass for their feet. Little as vagabondage accounts luxury, there was an appeal at once simple and artistic in such arrangements as these. The Wanderer seated himself opposite his host, and gave smiling approval to his hospitality.

But he ate very little, and only of salad and bread and fruit. To the wine he gave the generous appreciation of a connoisseur, and spoke of vintages and makers in a fashion that astonished the Squire. In fact, his whole conversation was an astonishment. There was something so incongruous between its variety, its acquaintance with all subjects, its classical knowledge, its literary familiarities, and the speaker himself, that Craddock grew more puzzled with every moment of their intimacy.

Who could he be? This strange being whose appearance was no better than that of one of his farm hands, yet whose speech was so educated, whose manners so perfect? His curiosity grew and grew. Their sojourn in the library added yet another grain of accumulation. Here the stranger "let himself go," as it were, on familiar and beloved ground.

The room itself was a consecration of age and silence to the highest and noblest development of human intellect. It was a large, low room, half panelled in oak, that met the latticed and wired cases covering the walls. The ceiling was of plain stucco work, centred by the crest of the Trebarwicks, emblazoned and picked out in dull gold and blue. Long, narrow windows looked out on another part of the grounds, an old pleasaunce, set around with escallonia and clipped boxwood; a space of velvet-green and dusky shadows. The furniture of the room was old and quaint. A square, carved table stood on a thick, moss-green carpet; chairs of many shapes were placed against the walls and on either side of the carved pillars of the fire-

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place; a couch covered in sombre tapestry stood in one corner, faced by a carved wooden easel on which stood a painting. The painting was covered by a silken drapery of glowing and fantastic hues; the one spot of brilliance in an atmosphere of sombre and yet stately dignity. Severity marked the scheme of decoration and furnishing, and throughout breathed an air of restfulness inexpressibly soothing. The stranger looked around with frank, admiring eyes.

"In winter times, with a fire roaring in that massive grate and the wind and the sea howling for admission there beyond, this room must mean a paradise of comfort," he said.

"You are right. It is then that I love it best. I wish you would believe that you are at liberty to enjoy that comfort whenever you please."

The Wanderer laughed. "You are strangely trusting. For aught you know I might take you at your word."

"My word is meant to be taken for what it expressed."

"And if I made free here of your chairs and your fire and your books—what then?"

"You would be conferring an inestimable blessing on a very lonely and a very unhappy man."

For a moment the Wanderer kept silence. His eyes strayed to the locked and unlocked cases; to chequered bindings and creamy vellum and mellowed calf. His strong sight read the titles with ease, despite the drawn blinds which subdued the afternoon sunlight. Then he moved from case to case, murmuring a word of criticism or approval as he named the volumes.

Before one case he paused a long moment. It was locked. On its highest shelf stood a row of books in bizarre bindings; one row. As the stranger's eyes flashed from one to the other their owner watched him with a half furtive curiosity. Strangely grave and stern grew the Wanderer's face. Suddenly he turned. The eyes of the two men met once more as they had met in the glade of the garden.

"A strange collection—that?"

"I suppose so; but it interests me. It represents a psychology of intense importance. It means the source of

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the maddest crimes and the wildest lusts that have scourged Humanity; the secret of strange thoughts and strange imaginings; the power that has made spiritual things vibrate to earthly moods and passions. I have tried to fathom their meaning. But—you see the case is locked."

"Does that mean it holds no secret from you?"

"No—only from others. The key that opens that case never leaves my possession."

"It is as well. There is subtler poison on that shelf than in the whole pharmacopœia of the Borgias!"

Craddock smiled. "The Borgias knew something of life, did they not? What dull prose it is in these days."

"Dull!" The speaker's face quivered with swift antagonism. "Dull? Life—that vivid, uncertain, change-ful, unsatisfying wonder! That thing of moods and shades, and passions and experiences. Life *dull*! By all the gods of old and the gods that be, what has chanced to you, man, that you should so libel the one thing realizable as—yourself? Are you not proof that there is something accountable for you, and to which you, in turn, must render account? Life—the force that creates and curses, and blesses and atones! Life—the one poor word man uses to express all the vastness of Infinitude! Life—that though it be long as dotage, or brief as an infant's cry, is yet a demand for expression or for power! *You*—who have known its heritage, and tested its pleasures, and sinned its sins—to so misname it!"

"Its pleasures have not come in my way. Its sins——"

Again he paused and looked at the vivid face, the glowing, passionate eyes of this mysterious Bohemian. "Why should you affirm I have sinned its sins?" he asked abruptly.

The stranger pointed to the locked case, the weird and lurid bindings representing books whose every page was a profanation of Purity.

"If you have studied *those*," he said, "and come out from their evil clutches sane and undefiled, then some one or something has worked an undeserved miracle on your behalf! But enough of Vice. Let us stray once more into the safer pleasaunce of philosophy."

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THE afternoon waned. Through the open windows of the library the slanting sun-rays spoke of day's decline. Yet still those two strangely met companions talked on unweariedly. There seemed an infinitude of subjects to discuss. A phase, a fancy, a topic led to ever-varying paths of criticism. Sometimes agreement held them in the content of kindred souls ; sometimes diversity of view meant a sharp argument. There would come a grudging admission ; a quick passage of arms. At last the Wanderer rose to take his leave.

The Squire accepted his farewells with evident reluctance, and put any volume he wished to read at his disposal.

He made a careful selection. "It is more than good of you," he said. "I am your debtor in many ways. For, to tell you the truth, I was reluctant to leave my cave yet awhile. That boy you saw this morning interests me. He is one of those seers of visions and dreamers of dreams who have before now upset the theories of sacerdotalism. I recognize in him the spirit of a Savonarola, Wesley, Saul of Tarsus. He is instinct with the zeal of the proselytizer. I can foresee——"

He paused abruptly. Craddock looked inquiry.

"Storm and trouble and disaster," went on the Wanderer slowly. "The old warfare that is for ever new ; the war between the soul and the senses ; manhood and Divinity. Only one human soul ever escaped that fate, or else, if he did not escape it, his chroniclers have wisely drawn a veil of secrecy over the most important factors of life."

"I have noticed the boy you speak of. A fisher lad, is he not ? I have seen him in the boats with the other men, or sometimes alone. He has a wonderfully beautiful face. What is his history ?"

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"He is but the salvage of a shipwreck which cast him here some ten or eleven years ago. He was picked up and adopted by a pair of kindly Cornish fisher folk. They named him David, which, by the way, is more suitable than most chance-given names. David—the shepherd-boy, the wise king, the fool of his passions, the sweet singer of Israel: the man after God's own heart, which, if Scripture is to be credited, means a very faulty and fallible choice. However, I should like to interest you in his modern namesake. He is no common type; he is of the stuff that makes a world's wonder; he will play martyr and saint for sake of a belief! He will bear his own cross to his own chosen Calvary, and crucify himself for sheer perversity!"

"You read him as a future fanatic?"

"I read him as I know he will be," said the Wanderer sadly. "No man shall escape his fate. But if you would help this boy, you would be rendering a great service to humanity. His mind is far in excess of his years and his teachers. You have books *there*"—he pointed to the shelves of Theology—"which would mean a liberal education."

"But why should I interfere with his destiny? If his taste tends towards missionizing and preaching, he had better not meddle with Theology. It has an awkward knack of upsetting theories. Let the boy learn from his own people, and accept their definition of Divine Will. To drive his young mind through evidence of fallibility and misinterpretation would be a poor way of furnishing him with spiritual weapons."

"He will find his own weapons, and he will interpret his own mission."

"The boy is nothing to you?" said the Squire quickly.

"Nothing—save what Samuel seemed to Eli when he had to acknowledge the mystery of his call. My knowledge of him is limited to three meetings. The third you witnessed this morning. But I feel sorry to see him wasting life and opportunities in so cramped a sphere."

"And it would please you if I widened its outlook?"

"Yes."

"You foresee no danger? You have heard my opinions,

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recognized my animosity to my fellow-man; my hatred of conventions—my utter Agnosticism? And you throw this embryo saint at my feet and bid me open the doors of Doubting Castle to him?"

"No harm comes of 'honest doubt,' if we may believe a poet who found his best inspiration in these very surroundings. I look less at danger than at enlightenment. In his present condition my young prophet is starving in the midst of plenty. He has no means of education save what the musty brains of the rector of Poltreath can furnish. His theological instructor is an old itinerant preacher of the Bunyan-Wesley type. I paint his position in these simple facts. You can read their influence into his future."

The Squire looked thoughtful. He had not invited this singular being to his jealously guarded hermitage with any view of extending his charity to a mere fisher lad, however interesting. The boy was *that*, he allowed. But he saw no reason for burdening himself with his education. It was true he was rich and had no ties, and could play at philanthropy if he wished, but up to this present moment he had not wished it. Yet the idea possessed an uneasy attraction.

"Think it over," said his new acquaintance abruptly. "There is no fear that the boy will go forth to seek his fortune yet awhile. Some day that will happen. It is to be expected. But for the present—his fate is in our hands."

"Ours?"

"He has awakened our interest. And to be interested in any one's welfare is the first step towards influencing it. We have taken that step this morning."

"How is it that your recognition of the fact is also your sole sense of responsibility?"

"Ah—there you have me! But surely my condition answers your question. What could I do for the boy save turn him into a vagabond like myself? He is worthy of a better fate, though he'll not find a happier one."

"I wish you would tell me *who* you are!" exclaimed the Squire suddenly.

A stormy flash shot from out the dark eyes he questioned.

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"Who I am and what I am concerns only myself. I have no name—no birthright—no heritage save Freedom. That I claim by the common right of all humanity."

"But may I not call you something authorized by ordinary conventional uses?"

"I answer to no name. I told you so this morning. To and fro the earth I make my endless pilgrimage. All its cities and all its deserts and all its wide expanse of land and sea are known to me." His voice deepened and grew strangely sad. "Nature holds no secret I have not fathomed, and life no mystery I have not read. Pain and Death alone escape me. Why—how you look! Are my words so strange? There is a stranger truth behind them. One that no volume of all *that* wisdom yonder can explain, one that no living man can understand. In vain I seek the soul that shall meet or mate with mine. A chance glimpse comes to me at unexpected moments. But it is only a glimpse—a mirage born of my own vain longing. I thought to-day——"

He paused and looked out through the open windows. High walls and branching trees had made the little pleasure-dusk with shadows. Everything seemed strangely still. Only the murmur of the sea sounded in the silence; a call, a plaint, a never-ending voice, that echoing from the shores of Time, should end with but Time's own cessation.

The Squire became conscious of bewilderment. Whom had he entertained? A madman or a visionary, or some self-inspired poet crazed with the fervour of his own imaginings?

Like an answer to his confusion came that strange, melodious voice: "I am not mad; nor do I dream, save of what all mankind has dreamt in some moment of life. If you ask more I cannot answer. But if you grant me the freedom of your citadel, I shall not abuse it. From time to time we may meet, if you desire. But for sake of any friendship that may ensue I beg of you to banish all curiosity concerning me. Accept me as a novelty, or an interest; accept me as you did to-day, or let me go now with but this memory to class my visit amongst the incidents of your life."

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"I confess I cannot understand you, but comprehension of an interest has little to do with its acceptance. Let me repeat that my house is at your service whenever you choose to visit it. I can only be your debtor for such visits. As for the boy——"

"Yes—what of him?" interrupted the stranger eagerly.

"I *will* see him again if you desire it. And if I find that my books or myself can assist his future vocation——"

"They can and will," interposed that deep, compelling voice.

"Then I shall place them at his service—for your sake."

"I would rather you did it from any other motive."

"Unfortunately no other has presented itself. In life the great things swallow up the less. You can translate the affair of this morning as you please."

"I shall come again, and I will bring the boy with me."

"When? Soon! To-morrow?" exclaimed the Squire eagerly.

"Since I am your tenant-at-ease for my own pleasure to-morrow will suit as well as any other day. We have good authority for doing quickly that which has to be done!"

He went out and away with no further ceremony, and Craddock stood at the open window watching him in such perplexity of mind as had never touched his selfish equanimity for years.

Who and what was this Wanderer of the earth? This being of caprice and unaccountability, whose mind was a storehouse of knowledge, and whose philosophy posed on so high an altitude of scorn that even accredited wisdom looked an *apologia* for what it had failed to prove. Who?

The question was unanswerable, since no previous experience of his life could be called upon for assistance.

Much as he loved mystery and the entanglements of occult and psychical phenomena, he yet failed to deduce from their evidence any satisfactory solution of the present problem. When he went back to his beloved study and threw himself into his favourite chair, he found that all his usual aptitude for reasoning and reflection had deserted him. Even his books had lost their charm for once. Life had come to a sudden full-stop. He had been

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violently arrested on its placid journey. He had been forced into accepting and welcoming an intrusion. Nay more—he had been coerced into a species of philanthropic patronage, a position for which he had little taste and less inclination.

A sense of uneasiness and discomfort crept over his mind, even as the evening shadows crept over the sky. His room grew dark, but he did not ring for lights. He only sat on wrapped in thoughts as dark and obscure as the surrounding shadows. He recalled every word of those arguments and discussions of the day; he saw them coloured with the vivid personality of the speaker, convincing even in their whimsicality; he saw, as it were, the sombre fabric of his sheltered life rent suddenly in twain and letting in not only sunlight, but a prismatic glory of hues that danced and quivered like living things before his dazzled eyes; he saw new promise and new interest. Then the thought of responsibility crossed that magical web: a young life, a young soul—the dawn of a mystical awakening. Who was he to charge himself with such divine things?

Yet here they were on his threshold; at his door; breaking down barriers of selfishness; intruding eagerly into this warm shelter of intellectuality; demanding his help; arresting his attention.

It seemed to him, when he recalled those parting words, that he had had no power to resist the will of this stranger; that he had been obliged to accept a self-imposed task, and must fulfil it.

"And I am no fit guide for youth," he told himself, with fierce upbraiding. "Have I not shunned it—avoided it—hated it almost, since the tragedy of its sins came home to me? What fate is this that once again sets before me the exquisite temptation of watching its opening hours, its promised triumphs; living over again what I hoped and desired—and lost?"

He rose suddenly. The room seemed full of ghostly forms. The sea as it swelled and broke at the foot of the cliffs held a note of terror in its moaning voice.

A knock at the door brought the safeguard of commonplace things to his overstrained nerves. Lights, service,

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the dinner hour, the prose of his old butler's presence. For an hour he forgot, or told himself he had forgotten. But when the meal was ended he found the restraint of walls unendurable for once. An ungovernable restlessness seized him again. He went out and opened the gate, and stood looking over the quiet country-side, the scattered cottages, the moonlit sea. Then he closed the gate behind him and set out for one of those long tramps that, before now, had proved the best panacea for his frayed and irritated nerves.

He walked over the soft turf of the cliffs until he reached a rough path—a mere sheep track. It descended to a wide and natural ledge—a rocky platform set about with huge broken boulders. To the right, another narrow track led to the fishing village of Poltreath. Its stone cottages and lichened roofs showed grey and shadowy in the soft moonlight.

The Squire seated himself on one of the boulders. At his feet and at the base of the cliffs the sea was sweeping in. No verdure clothed the slope; all was barren rock and broken granite; and facing this rough platform was the odd, misshapen monster whose sphinx-like attitude had always possessed so strange a fascination. He sat there now in the quiet loneliness of the night, and watched the waves break against its sides and the moonlight quiver over its lifted head and crouching body. It always brought back to his mind an episode of youth—a night in the Egyptian desert. It was a memory he hated, and therefore unforgettable; for only the pleasant memories of life lapse, the regrettable ones remain. The swish of the sea might have been the swirl of the sand as the wind drove it relentlessly across void spaces. The sky was as deep and velvety in its softness, the light of the stars almost as brilliant. With his elbows on his knees and his head resting on his hands, Craddock sat there—motionless as the monster at which he gazed, deaf to all sounds except that of the sea.

He was recalled at last by a voice close at hand. He looked up and saw the figure of the fisher lad in whose destiny he had that day promised to intervene.

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"I—I beg your pardon, sir," said the boy. "But I was afraid you had fallen asleep, and this cliff is dangerous."

"I was not asleep," answered the Squire, "I was only thinking. But what brings you out of your bed at this uncanny hour? It is past midnight."

"I could not sleep, so I got up and came here. I often sit here at night."

"So do I. I wonder I have not met you. However, since you have been the subject of my thoughts, I am hardly surprised to see you. Thought is a power for attraction. To desire strongly almost certainly brings the desire to your feet."

"I think I have never desired anything very much—yet. At least, until this last week."

"This last week? I could give a good guess at the disturbing influence. Your friend of the cave, is it not?"

"Yes, sir."

"How long have you known him?"

"A few days."

"And I—one. Would you be surprised to hear that his interest in you has gone the length of interesting me also?"

The boy looked gravely at the upturned face. He was standing scarcely a yard away, but on a higher level of the rock.

"I should think it very wonderful," he said slowly.

"But then everything about him is wonderful."

"Do you know his name?"

"He told me to call him 'the Wanderer.'"

The Squire broke into a short laugh. "He is consistent on that point. Well, since you are less surprised than I expected, what do you say to a change in your life? I am going to offer you the golden key that opens the magic portals of existence—Knowledge. If you care to accept it, come to me at the Hall yonder. Come every day for a week. That means seven days; seven is the cryptic number. I will probe your young brains and see what they are worth. Then, if your natural guardians are willing, and your brain has responded to the test, I will charge myself with your education. At present I have no object in life. To-day one was offered me, or, more

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correctly speaking, thrust upon me. It has awakened me from a long lethargy. What do you say to the plan?"

The boy looked calmly into the strange, half furtive eyes of the man.

"What can I say? I long to learn. I love books as my life."

"You cannot have a very wide acquaintance with them?"

"No. Mr. Crouch, the rector of the church over there, says he has lent me all he owns, and taught me all he knows. I love the sea, but I don't want to be a fisherman, like my father."

"David Perryn is not your father?"

"He calls himself so. He has been very good to me. I think he is grieved because I want to be a preacher."

"You want *that*?"

"I feel no other want. It is in everything. It means everything—that and the sea."

"I have come into a region of mysteries it would seem!" exclaimed Craddock. "This day has been a day of revelations. And they have been lying at my feet, as it were—and I slept the sleep of ignorance above! Well, it is time they were investigated. Since I am unable to surprise you, my young evangelist, I must e'en content myself with helping you, supposing you are willing to be helped. Perhaps you add that curious trait called pride to your other qualities?"

"It seems to me that the whole meaning of life must be helpfulness," said the boy. "What one has not, another should supply if he can."

"A novel view of Socialism! You would soon equalize humanity with that doctrine. Possibly you intend to preach it?"

"I cannot tell what I shall preach, or *how*," said the boy, looking out over the sea to that mystic landmark of his vision. "But I know I am called to *do* something. And the way and the means will be given me."

Craddock was silent. The mocking rejoinder on his tongue failed him as he looked at the beautiful spiritualized face.

How strangely the boy's words fitted into that com-

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pulsion which he had at first resented and now welcomed!

"The way and the means."

First the Wanderer, and now the young visionary, had pointed to himself as way and means of exploiting a new evangelist.

Would it be any use to draw back even now—at this juncture? To refuse to stir in a matter wholly apart from his own interests, his own beliefs?

He tried to throw off the weight of responsibility. He once again put it to the test of a choice external and apart from his own will.

"There are others to consult. You must not forget that your adopted father has some right to decide your future for you."

The boy smiled.

"He could not make me anything but what I am. What God wills I shall be. That—I know."

Craddock rose abruptly. "Since you know, there is nothing more to be said!"

VI

THE next day broke with heavy rainstorms; a wild wind lashed the sea to fury.

Craddock had slept badly and woke late. When he at last descended to the breakfast-room, Morley, his manservant, told him that his acquaintance of the previous day was in the study.

"He bade me not disturb you, sir. I understood he had your permission to use the room if he desired."

"Quite so. I hope you had a fire lit?"

"Yes, sir. You told me to be guided by the weather, not the season."

"Ask the—" Craddock hesitated, and glanced at the impervious face of perfectly trained servitude—"Ask the gentleman if he will come in here and have some coffee. Oh—is there any one with him?"

"A little fisher lad, sir, from the village."

"Ask them both."

The man retired, and in a few moments returned, ushering in the Wanderer and David as if they were lords of the realm. He had perfect manners, and had lived long enough with Craddock to accept his vagaries without surprise.

"Well, Squire, you see I took your word as meant—in a double sense. I fetched my young Samuel from his roof-tree and brought him here for your examination. He is less ignorant than you imagine, and his knowledge of Holy Writ would furnish an Archbishop with sermons, though I believe *they* preach rather worse than the ordinary Doctors of Divinity!"

"We made acquaintance last night," said Craddock. "Sit down, both of you, and have some coffee. I am sorry you had such a long, wet walk."

"Oh, weather never troubles me! Nature and I are

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too old friends to quarrel. Your coffee smells inviting. It is long since I had a cup. Longer still since I sat at a properly appointed breakfast-table. Aren't you ashamed of so much individual luxury? You ought to be."

Craddock smiled. "I can't say that I am. David, will you drink coffee, or is it too stimulating?"

"I have never drunk anything in my life but water," said the boy.

"Cold comfort for the day's work. But there it is on the sideboard. Help yourself, and eat what you please. My table is as much at your service as myself."

"You have the Arab's notion of hospitality," said the Wanderer. "Unusual in an Englishman."

"I have lived in tent and desert in my time," said Craddock.

"That perhaps accounts for your sympathy with a nomad like myself. This coffee is a beverage worthy of the Grand Turk! I had not thought it possible to taste the like of it so far west of the Ottoman Empire!"

"You seem to have a world-wide experience of men and things," said the Squire, looking with even more intense curiosity at his guest than had filled his mind the previous day.

"Do I remind you of a certain mythological gentleman who had gone to and fro to the ends of the earth, and walked up and down thereon, for no better reason than proving the patience of a very commonplace individual?"

"Does not that history belong to the so-called 'Wisdom Literature' of the Old Testament?"

"It ought to, if theologians agreed upon any point of interest to the common weal."

"What are theologians?" demanded David suddenly.

"They are a race of scientists who have tried to fit in the nature and reason of man with the revelation of his Maker. They have succeeded in publishing an enormous amount of blunders, in confusing zealous inquirers, and in conferring a few doubtful benefits on the thinker. They are hated by priests because they object to doctrinal uniformity, and insist on proof instead of clinging to fable. They have endeavoured to prove that the Bible has a

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place in literature, but is not necessarily a text of Inspiration; that Plato is quite as worthy of reverence as Job. Which brings us back to our starting-point—the approved pattern of human patience.”

“I have always thought *that* history as purely fictional as any piece of work whose intention is to ‘point a moral for the adorning of a tale,’” said Craddock. “But when one knows that two of the ancient Books of Chronicles are a forgery, that the ideas of Cosmogony were derived from Babylonia, that David and Isaiah could not have written half of their accredited records, and that the early documents of the Hebrews were subjected to all kinds of revision and alteration and distortion of their original meaning—what becomes of the old childish belief in Divine Inspiration?”

“You are frightening David,” interrupted the Wanderer. “Look at his face.”

Craddock did look. He saw that the boy had grown very pale. Distress and bewilderment were in his eyes. He had pushed aside his plate, and his hands were tightly clasped.

“I suppose this is new to you?” said the Squire.

“Such discussions are not milk for babes,” remarked the Wanderer.

“Did you *mean* all that? You really doubt the Word of God? You say that one part is not true, and another is?” exclaimed the boy. Then he sprang to his feet as if he could not wait for answer. “Oh! it can’t be. It can’t. It *can’t*! It is all as God spoke it—all as God meant it. It is His voice and His message and His will. To doubt would be sin. To judge for ourselves—”

His voice broke. He looked from one face to the other. He knew these men as clever, trained, scholarly. Life, and the great world of life, held no secrets from them. They had read and studied and travelled, while he was as yet wrapped in the swaddling clothes of ignorance. And yet his very soul cried out against their cynical criticism of what his baby lips had lisped as a first Belief; as Prayer, Inspiration, Truth. Truth as sure and convincing as that he lived in the world at all, and recognized in its beauty the never-ending miracle of existence.

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"Say what you please, David," broke in the sonorous voice of the Wanderer. "We will listen."

For a moment the boy's eyes turned to the watchful faces. He was too unskilled in reading the mask of dissimulation to do more than accept the compliment of attention. They had said they would listen. Well, he would speak.

Rapidly and without effort words came, even as they had come on that night of the vision on the Mount. The Bible had been his guide and comforter too long to fail him in this hour of need. He spoke of it with all the conviction possible to Faith; the Faith that asks no proof, but is enough to itself. Doubt seemed to him a monster hideous and terrifying. God had created; God had blessed; God had sent His prophets to declare His will. It was all as the Hedgerow Preachers preached—those Tramps of Spirituality who from Gautama down to the Salvation Army have flung defiance at human logic.

Craddock smiled more than once, but the face of the second listener was serious and intent. When the passionate voice ceased the Squire rose from his seat. "Go—there—to the room beyond," he said, "and wait till we join you. Excitement of this sort is bad for one so young."

The boy's head drooped. He went obediently to the door; opened it, and found his way to the study. There he sank on his knees; confused, abashed, unstrung by the intense emotion that had overwhelmed him.

"I am glad you recognize your duty," said the Wanderer dryly. "The greatest crimes of the world have sprung from defective teaching. Ignorant parents, teachers, priests, parsons, fanatics—these should have no part in training any offshoot of individuality. They have only one idea of education, and that a false one. Now, do you see why I have given you an interest in life, as well as arrested you midway in a career of intellectual selfishness? This weed of the sea tossed upwards from its greedy maw has a Mission, and he will fulfil that Mission at any cost. Amidst this Babel of a world, this atmosphere of spiritual confusion, he will stand out as from all time the Denouncer and Enthusiast has stood out. Had I a home to offer him, or means to educate him, I would

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take those responsibilities on my unworthy shoulders. But I have neither. A vagabond life and a rampant philosophy would be a crude school for such intelligence. Therefore I have commended him to you. I have no doubt you will one day ask yourself how I had the consummate impudence to preach a duty, or burden your well-conducted life with obligation. For that, the Future will answer. But remember—a boy's life is a man's life on a lesser scale, affected for good or evil by the ruling motive of his heart. According to the preponderance of such good or evil will be his fate—worthy or unworthy, noble or base. But, in this present instance, I do not think there is much baseness to fear. If anything, David's nature errs on the side of overstrained morality; a purity of sense that will be hard to overthrow. He stands between God's inspiration and man's training. It may sound impious, but I have known as mischievous mistakes grow out of one as the other; which proves there is a fault in the Universe somewhere. Have I said enough, or do you hate me? Most men do—sooner or later!"

Craddock looked at the noble face shadowed by a sudden regret, and his wonder and bewilderment grew yet stronger.

"Hate you! How could I? How could any one?" he faltered.

"Because truth is always hated and always feared, and because it is my mission to speak it. Yes—I, too, have a mission, as your eyes ask. One I cannot explain. One of which I can foretell nothing. Even the end."

He rose in his turn, and signed towards the door.

"Let us go and confer with our infant Teacher," he said, "for he has taught us—something. You can't deny it. Only to the pure in heart do visions come, and Archangels speak. On that young tongue has been laid the fire from an unknown altar. It owns an eloquence that shall move and sway mankind, and to us is given its training."

Words were impossible. Craddock could find none. He allowed the stranger to lead the way as if house and possessions were his, and not their owner's. Together they entered the study to find David thrown upon the floor before the great fire-place, his head buried in his hands, his whole frame shaken with sobs.

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He heard no sound of their entrance; he was caught and crushed by a sudden passion of grief and impotence. Despite the wave of denial that had so fiercely swept aside the first intrusion of Doubt a small, persistent voice questioned his soul. The same voice, the same question, as marks the birthday of Man's Fall.

"Has—God said?" it whispered. "How do you know?"

"My little Samuel!" exclaimed the voice that already stood for mastery and adoration in the boy's mind. "Why this weakness? Are you repenting of enthusiasm, or weeping over our backsliding? Come, dry your eyes and listen. This is the birthday of your Fate! The day star of your Fortunes shines on the horizon of Hope! I have played Providence to the soul of youth before now, but never with so far-reaching a prescience of importance. Your education will be conducted in a manner befitting your calling. In a quiet corner of a foreign land, a philanthropist of my acquaintance has founded a College for the training of Enthusiasms. It is, in fact, an art centre. To it come, or are sent, the geniuses that should sit in unveiled Olympus. The souls that desire knowledge; the Thoughts that become Lives. From out its classic gates have swept unacademic honours. Fame has wreathed its portals with laurels, and the pulse and passion of Youth have played in its pageants of achievement. There all secrets of Life may be learnt—or ignored. For inclination is the sole motive power of Intellectuality, and who desires, receives. Ah! I have interested you to the exclusion of grief. Do you see this—gentleman?"

He pointed to Craddock, who still remained silent. "Well," continued the Wanderer, "in him behold your benefactor. Nature has denied him any tie that means bondage. He accepts one at the bidding of a force as strong as Nature's—if not as compulsory. To him you will look in future for such things as are needful to your welfare. This training College for which you are bound makes but small demand on one's purse—which is a good thing for the students. Like the sparrows of the earth, you need take no account for to-day or to-morrow.

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Live. Think. Learn. Be thankful that Life is yours, and do your part in it. So you will best serve the purpose of Creation. Acquire knowledge, but be not proud of your achievements. Wisdom means but increase of sorrow, as said the wisest man the world has ever known. Look on Humanity as an ant heap to which each individual ant drags his grain of contribution. But every grain augments the Whole; and the building up and completion of the Whole is given to man. Some are poor architects, and some are negligent, and some refuse to work at all, and by such refusal weight themselves with a double burden; and some seek to destroy what has been already achieved, and they are the worst offenders. Yet so vast is the scheme, so immense the purpose of that Building, that every failure will have time and space for renewed effort ere completion crowns it!"

The boy was gazing rapt and entranced into the speaker's face. His tears had ceased. A great peace and a great thankfulness stole over his heart. It seemed to him as if a veil had been suddenly lifted; as if doubt and ignorance were swept aside. He rose to his feet. He looked from the face of the speaker to that dark, inscrutable one of his benefactor. It was strange he could feel no gratitude to *him*. He remembered their meeting the previous night. He recalled those words: "For seven days you must come to me. Seven is the cryptic number."

A date-rack on the table marked this day as the 17th of August. Seven days marked his first acquaintance with the man who had influenced his destiny.

Seeing he was unable to speak, Craddock now interposed. "I should like to know something of David's acquirements before sending him to try issues with other lads," he said. "This College—that you spoke of—where is it?"

"In the heart of the Tyrol," answered the Wanderer. "Its President and chief is renowned for his learning, but even more for his ability to impart it in forms and degrees suitable to the varying requirements of his students. It would be as useless to send our David to an English University as to a Board-school. He has a soul above set standards, and musty conventions. He needs a College of

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Individuality. I recognized that at first acquaintance. You, my friend, require seven days to discover what I detected in as many minutes. All I ask of you is to place the boy where I suggest until his seventeenth year. By then he will have found out his own meaning in the scheme of Things, and be grubbing for his own morsel of grain in that ant heap."

"But—I had hoped—I had intended——"

A wave of the hand seemed to consign things so insignificant to the universe at large!

"Intentions are only man's excuse for what he is unable to perform. You, my friend, would proceed on old-fashioned and conventional lines. My magic wand will do more for our protégé in three years than your project could have executed in thirty! By the way, David, have you an authorized date of existence?"

The boy shook his head.

"Neither do you own a surname? You can hardly face your new life without the latter. Shall we baptize him, Squire? Send him forth equipped with a cognomen of respectability? David is too limited an appellation. But what ought to follow? Not your name. It might lead to scandal. The world has only faith in the worst motives. What do you say, my Dreamer of dreams? Have you any idea that lends itself to so primitive a convention?"

Again the boy shook his head. It seemed of little moment what he was called. He stood for himself and his purpose in life. Other things were unimportant.

"A name you must have," continued the Wanderer. "Shall we seek inspiration at yonder fount of Wisdom?"

He pointed to a shelf of the book-case on which stood a vellum-covered Bible, placed between a Concordia and the history of Josephus, and elbowed by various commentaries. He went to the case and took out the Book, then laid it before the boy. "Open and read," he said.

David bent over the Sacred Word. His lips moved. Then he opened it, letting his finger rest upon a line. The Wanderer looked, and then signed to Craddock. "I am afraid it does not help us very much," he said.

"Still, it is a coincidence," said Craddock.

"You mean about the Mount?"

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"Yes, as connected with his vision, and its consequent results."

David was looking down at the page. Mechanically he noted the word on which his finger rested—*Hermon*.

"Read out the verse," said the Squire suddenly.

And the boy read out: "From Baal-gad under Mount Hermon unto the entering into Hamath."

The two men glanced at each other. "There is a choice of three," remarked Craddock dryly. "But for nineteenth century purposes 'Hermon' strikes me as the most suitable. What do you say—David Hermon?"

The boy still stood looking down at the open page, which prophesied of the driving out of seemingly harmless peoples so that the acquisitive Israelite might gain yet more possessions. As for the name—what mattered one more than another, since he inherited none?

"What do you say?" repeated his new guardian. "A mountain seems to have something about it akin to your ambitions. The most famous of all sermons was preached upon a Mount. Olivet was a mount—and—Calvary. Your star points to both."

The boy closed the Book. "Let it be," he said. "A name is a small thing to trouble about."

"Small things may express a fate, or embody a tragedy," said the stranger.

"Since the name is decided upon," interposed Craddock, "I should like to commence the work of preparation. It will be rather a sudden change from a fisherman's cottage to a college of students. For—though I am ignorant of the particular *status* of this seminary amongst the Tyrolean Mountains—I suppose it is founded on the usual scholastic principles. How much Latin do you know, David? Can you translate Virgil?"

"Yes, sir," said the boy. "I did that with Mr. Crouch this year."

"Any Greek?"

The boy shook his head. "I can read a little of the Greek Testament; that is all."

The Wanderer laughed suddenly. "My good Squire," he said, "this boy will not need classics to teach him the true divinity of life. He knows more of that now than

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you or I. Possibly he may forget half of it by the time his education is complete, but that need not trouble you. Lay it to heart that you have performed the noblest work of man—helping another less fortunate fellow-creature to plunge into the quagmires of Knowledge. Woman, however, was his first instructor. I doubt not she will be his last."

Craddock's face grew dark with sudden anger. "Why bring her name into a matter like the present?"

"Do you suppose our young Sir Galahad is going to exclude Nature's most exquisite marplot. She is in every destiny as in every birth. We owe our being to her in the first place, and often our damnation in the next. David is only in the first stage."

He waved his hand towards the book-case. "I leave you," he said, "to your mutual comfort and instruction. The rain and the wind are sounding an invitation I always find irresistible. I am going to walk to Land's End!"

"Don't talk such mad nonsense!" exclaimed the Squire. "You are coming back here to share my luncheon, and help me pass the hours of a vile, inclement day. I have counted upon you. Don't disappoint me."

"And what of David? Our conversation yesterday was scarcely attuned to saintship?"

"If David wishes to stay he can have a room to himself, and books enough to feast a literary Gargantua."

"Well, since our acquaintance is not destined to be long I will not go quite so far as the Land's End. In point of fact, I will accept the literary freedom of your citadel, and the wind may howl its music of invitation to unheeding ears—for once."

He went up to one of the book-cases. It was unlocked. He glanced at the long row of doors; they were all open. A sudden glance flashed to the owner of such generous grant. "You are widening the world for me," he said.

"In accepting obligations you confer them," answered Craddock.

Then he laid his hand on the boy's shoulder. "Come, David," he said. "We will seek illumination on a lower scale and in a smaller sphere."

He led the way through the breakfast-room and down

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a long passage to a small study, plainly and almost shabbily furnished.

"This," he said, pointing to the maps on the wall and the shelves full of old and torn and dog-eared volumes, "this was the old schoolroom of the Trebarwicks. It is a liberal education in the art of what to avoid. But in that cupboard there I have made a selection of books on which I should like to examine you from time to time—condensed knowledge, but useful. You know, this is the age of Tabloids. Physical and mental nutriment are alike compressed into small doses. Here, now, is Tabloid Number one: 'History and Theology of the Books of Moses'; then Carlyle—in fragments; Roman History, largely condensed; Cato and Addison; Kingsley and Ruskin; Milton and Shakespeare—a choice of fragments: the best of each in the smallest compass. Enough to whet the appetite for more. What shall we try first?"

David's eyes rested hungrily on the volumes at his disposal. Half timidly he touched the Shakespeare.

Craddock drew it out and laughed. "Not a bad choice," he said, "although no student of to-day accepts the actor as author. However, we can honour the work instead of disagreeing about the worker. After all, 'the play's the thing,' in more senses than one. First tabloid, that Master of Discontent—Hamlet."

VII

THE rain had ceased, but the wind still blew in fitful gusts. There was a sound of breaking seas upon the rocks, and the cliff path was slippery and dangerous as David made his way homewards.

He had remained at the Hall till four o'clock. Then Craddock dismissed him, saying he would come over to the Perryns' cottage next morning, and explain his intentions with regard to the boy's education.

David was less elated than satisfied. It was all very wonderful, but also it was something that he had felt was bound to happen, and he accepted it as he accepted his mission.

He resolved to stop at the Pascoes' cottage and tell them of his good fortune, but when he reached it he found little Ruth alone. The old man had gone to read to and comfort a sick neighbour.

David calmly imparted his news. The little maiden was aghast with surprise. She could hardly believe that since the previous morning his whole fate had altered—that a chance meeting had been fraught with such enormous consequences. Then, as she slowly mastered one fact she realized another; realized a long parting with her play-fellow, a change in the whole circumstance of their lives. Her eyes filled with tears.

"Will 'ee ever come back? Oh, David, will 'ee? I'm so feared you won't."

"I am to come back each year for the summer holidays, so Mr. Craddock says. He wishes me to spend them at the Hall, but I shall not do that. I shall stay with father and mother, of course."

"Ye'll be too grand soon for that," lamented Ruth. "Eddication 'tes what makes people superior, so gran'vather says. You know how 'tes already. Mr. Crouch he's

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taught ye to speak diff'rent in a manner to we here. An' that's but the beg'ning. The more ye knows the more ye'll want to know. An' doesn't the Good Book tell o' much larnin' bein' much sorrow?"

"I am coming back here to spend my life," said the boy confidently. "I mean to go to and fro preaching the Word as Wesley preached it!" His face kindled with sudden enthusiasm. He bent forward in his low wooden chair and gazed into the flames. "I often see it like a picture," he went on. "The green, quiet fields and row upon row of faces, and I standing up before them to declare God's wonders and His will. I—the instrument which that Divine Hand tunes to His own celestial music."

"But if the Squire at t' Hall yonder be goin' to eddicate ye, David, maybe he'll be puttin' ye into a proper church like Mr. Crouch's, an' then thee'll be a proper preacher an' hav' Reverend to thee name, same as Mr. Crouch hav' got."

"No," said David firmly, "I shall want much more than one small church in one small parish. I want to preach everywhere—all the world over. Not in fine build-ings and to those who are clothed in fine raiment, but to the poor and sick and unhappy."

"Oh, David!" said the girl, "that means thee'll be goin' for a missionary man, same as gran'vather du talk of; goin' to dreadful savage black folk in furrin parts. But here be gran'vather, for sure. He'll be praper mazed when ye tell him the news."

She hurried to the door to welcome the old preacher. He came in rather feebly, tired with a long walk and a battle with the strong sea wind.

The girl helped him off with his overcoat and set his cushioned chair ready for him in the chimney corner. Then she began to prepare some cocoa for his evening meal.

"David has grand news for 'ee, gran'vather," she said.

He's been tellin' me that th' Squire be goin' to eddicate him praper for th' ministry. An' he be goin' to leave us soon. In a week, bean't it, David?"

"Yes," said the boy, and he repeated his tale to old Zachariah.

That ancient patriarch listened with an interest.

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He was wondering if this interference meant a special intervention of Providence, even as Eli of old recognized the Divine Call in the child Samuel's awakening.

"Not that eddication is necessary for the fulfilment of the mission," he announced. "The Lord shows the way and we must take it. I found that out for myself, and I'm thinkin' thee've found it too, David, afore to-day."

"Yes," said the boy. "Long ago I promised myself to the work of Heaven, and I'll keep the promise!"

"God helpin' 'ee; ye should say that, David. Be not uplifted by the visions thee'st seen. Remember, tho' the seed be planted, there be the Devil at hand to snatch it away. And more—there's the danger o' vaingloryin'; of bein' uplifted in thee own conceit o' thyself. Walk warily, lad, an' walk in the light o' God's giving, for mind ye, not all who be called are chosen."

"I—am chosen," said the boy eagerly. He lifted his head and looked upwards. His face was as the face of an angel, so bright its glory, so strong its faith. There was a moment's silence. Then the old man's voice sounded once more.

"Let us pray," he said solemnly.

David Perryn and his wife accepted the wish of the Squire as final. Not for a moment did it occur to them to dispute it. The wonder of his interest in their sea-waif overwhelmed them. He had taken little notice of any one in the place before this chance meeting with David, all of which went to prove that the boy was no common boy; that Providence had interfered specially on his behalf, and that it would not be seemly for them to thrust their insignificant human wishes and human affections in the way of a Divine Mission.

Ever since that night when David had stood up and preached that unexpected sermon, they had regarded him with distant awe, half afraid of interference; recognizing that some strange power had called him to fulfil a Mission. It hurt their affections, but it also increased their pride in this adopted son who had always been to them a wonder and a mystery. That the haughty recluse of Trebarwick should actually visit them in their cottage, and spend a

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good half-hour discussing David's future, was only another proof of their boy's appointed destiny.

He was called as God's servant to God's service. No earthly power could intervene to hold him back. The World on the one side, the Master on the other, and the Call sounding clear and full above them. So matters stood. With mere everyday details, such as his college expenses, they had nothing to do. It had been taken out of their hands. They felt no sense of obligation. It seemed only right that the boy's importance should be recognized, and that a man like the Squire of Trebarwick should place wealth and means at his disposal.

To both these simple fisher folk the thought that their adopted son might one day be a real minister, with a real church and a parish and a vicarage, was a thought embodying their very highest ambition. "We saved him, we took charge of him for *this*," was in their minds even as the Squire set forth the plans for the lad's future. Craddock was surprised at the ease and dignity of their manner as much as by the perfect unselfishness of their devotion.

"The Lord's will" explained everything and accounted for everything. Who were they to oppose it?

"It mun be; it was to be," murmured Rachel Perryn, wiping her eyes with the corner of her spotless apron. "Th' dear lad were given first to our care, then, in th' appointed time, to yours, sir. Ye'll be good to him, won't 'ee? He'm but a tender sapling, yet easy to bend in the wind o' strong opinions. There's been them, sir, as said you was naught but an unbeliever, seein' as how you've ne'er set foot in church or chapel these many years. But if 'twere so, you'd not 'av' troubled your head about our lad. An' for th' rest, th' Lord will take care of him, an' teach him the duties of life. His Will be done."

Then David was called, and the arrangements as to his clothes and his journey made. For six weeks every summer he was to return here, and might choose the Hall or the cottage for roofstead. When he reached the age of seventeen the Squire's responsibility would cease, save in the matter of any arrangement that might need discussion, and would be purely optional on either side. For the

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boy the immediate present was delightful enough—books, learning, the joy of a scholarly, regulated life ; the novelty of foreign travel and foreign scenes. These were enough to fill his mind and exercise his fancy. Of any regret or sorrow at the coming parting he seemed quite incapable. Human affection was all absorbed in the importance of his mission ; in the dreams of his Future.

When the time for parting came, and the tears of his foster-mother fell upon his cheek and her accents were sounding in his ear, his whole attitude was but an echo of that other attitude for which Scripture gives good authority. "Woman, what have I to do with thee?"

He told himself those words had been spoken to a *real* mother ; one whose pangs, whose love, whose patience a great Church had elected to consecrate as scarcely less holy than those of her Son. There was no record of human obedience or human regret in the young Christ's early years. Only of His mission. Only of that calling set apart and kept apart from the ordinary joys and sorrows, duties, and responsibilities of a life assumed yet never lived as men live it.

Had David addressed this weeping Rachel with "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" she would have felt outraged and indignant. Yet such was the natural instinct of his heart in that moment. His outlook on life had widened so suddenly, his place and call to it looked so important, his limited natural affections seemed so weak and poor beside the overwhelming passion for things spiritual, that his soul shrank from close contact with mere humanity. He was almost glad that no real human parents claimed his affection, since gratitude was all he knew of love. "I am called for something Greater—something higher"—so ran his thoughts. And his eyes were bright and tearless, and his lips gave only smiles as farewell after farewell echoed and sobbed around him.

Even the Squire was surprised to see him so unmoved and so self-engrossed. But his seven days of acquaintance with this strange boy had shown him his absolute unlikeness to any previous experience.

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David was possessed of an insatiable craving for knowledge. And with gratification came also an aptitude for choice and assimilation of what was laid before him. His sole equipment for this seminary to which Fate was drifting him lay in this hunger for learning, and his stock of splendid health.

His wardrobe—chosen by the Squire, but limited to the directions of the cliff hermit—consisted of a sort of loose cassock, like those worn by acolytes of the Romish Church. This was the College dress, save at times of exercise or sports, when the loose upper garment would be laid aside for shirt and trousers, or short flannel drawers reaching only to the knees. To David these novel garments possessed merely the interest of novelty. He was thankful that no starched collar or stiff shirt was to interfere with a natural desire for freedom and ease.

He spent his last night at the Squire's. They were to start very early. Both Craddock and the strange Wayfarer were to go with the boy to his new quarters, but while the Squire and David took the ordinary route of travel, and had arranged to spend a night in London and a few days in Paris, the other man went by a route and method which he termed "sacred to vagabondage." He had left a day in advance. He took no farewell; he had merely appointed a place and time for meeting on the Austrian frontier and departed. David was conscious of a sudden feeling of loneliness—the nearest approach to regret of which his strange nature was capable. But the excitement of a fresh experience of travel soon abolished all other feelings.

How wonderful everything was, and how strange!

The boy had never been in a train before; never seen a real town of any importance; never realized what it could be to sweep at strange speed through ever-changing landscapes; to watch the sunlit panorama of hills and valleys; to dash by the curving coast-line, with the blue sea at his feet; to see scattered villages and square church towers, and miles of black and treeless country set with the shafts and chimneys of disused mines. Then for a space came softer and lovelier peeps of tree-shadowed valleys and the gleam of rivers; the widening glories of

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Lynher and Tamar, and the beautiful Hamoaze. Finally, a long wait at Plymouth, of whose novel history the Squire told him during an interval of lunch and a lounge on the Hoe.

Then the fair glories of Devon opened to him, and he stood at the window of the corridor carriage rapt and eager as town after town whirled its name to him, and left him to trace its significance by map or guide-book. To avoid questioning, Craddock had furnished him with both at the Plymouth bookstall. The hours sped on. The Squire was weary and had composed himself to sleep, but David was far too interested to withdraw his attention from the window.

Then evening fell, and a new and more marvellous change crept over everything. They were nearing London. London, whose very name spelt sorcery and wickedness. That Pit of Tophet of which old Zachariah had preached; that city of Modern Babylon whose garments were stained with blood and crime, and whose streets held sins of infamy unnameable. Its lights flashed; its suburbs rolled by in endless panoramic significance; its sounds of bewilderment filled the air. He was in its streets, breathing its air, gazing in a confusion of stirred senses at hurrying crowds and streams of traffic. How amazing it was! How absolutely impossible to realize or describe!

Then a cessation of it all. Quiet rooms; beautiful appointments; rich food. A room to sleep in that seemed worthy of a king; long, dreamless sleep. A call to get up and continue this wonderful journey. A huge station. Another train, long, and crowded with strange hurrying, restless people, with piles of luggage; leather boxes and strapped cases, and all the paraphernalia of travel. Wonderful! Yet not so wonderful as the fair, green Kentish country, the chalk cliffs, the blue, dimpled sea. Then—scarce an hour of the old sense of familiarity when more confusion and more bewilderment ensued! Now strange tongues clamoured in an unfamiliar language and strangely dressed people hovered round the train. The noise was deafening. The struggle and crush for seats seemed to indicate that half the world had crossed the Channel and was bound for Paris.

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At last they were off again. A new landscape, a new country—flatter, more even and monotonous; hot, shelterless fields in which women worked, and men in strange blue blouses sat about, or smoked under a hedge, or lazily rested on hoe or pitchfork to watch that thing of iron and steam bearing its human freight to a great Capital; only a name to these toilers of the field.

Then afternoon—hot and dusty. Sunset a warm, red radiance flushing a world of roofs and spires; churches and buildings, turrets and columns, rising billow-like from a sea of haze. Waves of heat; more noise, more confusion. The Terminus; the Douane. Finally a drive through magic streets; lights and music and gay laughter, and always that babble of strange tongues. *How could they understand one another?*

Rest at last. Another beautiful place: all soft carpets and dazzling lights, and tables spread for hungry humanity. Another wonderful room; a plunge in cool water, a brush-up of the blue serge travelling suit, and then a meal more wonderful than any yet in its service and appointments.

Then Craddock spoke, sipping a liqueur of cognac, and gazing from under weary lids at the boy's excited face. "If you are not tired, David, we will go out and have a look at Paris. It is—let me see—eight, no, ten years since I was here. Much has happened to us both. You're not tired? Well, run up for your hat, and I'll take you for your first glimpse of Wonderland."

VIII

IT was indeed Wonderland to the eyes of the fisher lad. But the strangest feeling in his mind was bewilderment at the enormous crowds—that ever-shifting, ever-changing panorama of human faces and figures, each representing a separate human entity to be reached, or affected, or saved by one Divine Power. For these, and such as these, had Christ descended from His high estate. For these, and such as these, suffered, sorrowed, died a death of shame.

Did they ever think of it? Did they ever, in the midst of this wondrous city, remember that in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, all might be changed, folded away as a garment, thrust back into the void from which it was created?

They wandered through the broad Boulevards, where at every café and restaurant groups of gaily dressed women and men sat drinking, smoking, chattering. The boy's serious eyes studied them as a new species of humanity. He knew nothing of the poisonous weeds floating on its surface—nothing of its undercurrents. It seemed to him that these crowds had nothing to do in life save amuse themselves. They had children with them, and young girls, and little old-fashioned men-monkeys who would have been schoolboys in England, but were mere *blasé flâneurs* of the Boulevards in wicked Paris.

At last Craddock chose a café and a table like the rest of the idlers and sightseers. He ordered coffee and cognac, and a *sirop* for David, telling him that in France no one drank water. He seemed strangely elated and excited. The atmosphere of Paris has that effect even on prosaic Britons.

"Is it at all like what you imagined?" he asked the boy.

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David said he had not attempted to imagine it before seeing it. There was nothing in his experiences or his dreams that embodied the City of Pleasure.

"I suppose not. Of course not," murmured Craddock absently. "You are younger than your years. If I were an artist, I should paint you as the Divine Neophyte. You fill me with wonder. I am only sorry I cannot superintend your education. However, each year will change you; and I shall await that change with expectant interest. One can only recreate one's experiences in another when one has outlived one's own. I wonder when your eyes will dream no longer, David, and your human nature awake, and all that divine harmony of soul and body grow harsh and discordant? For it must happen. It always *has* happened; it always will."

The boy was scarcely listening. He was looking at two priests who had drawn up their chairs to the next table. One was old and white-haired; the other young and provincial-looking. He gave quick, furtive glances at his neighbours and surroundings; he seemed timid and awkward. They were sipping black coffee and *eau sucrée*, and scarcely talking at all.

David could not have expressed how or why the idea of an imprisoned soul came to him. But the more he looked at the young priest's face, the stronger became that impression. He was as one in bondage; trapped by some stronger power; baffled at every turn that promised yet never granted liberty.

Craddock noted the boy's interest and understood it. Here was another zealot of another school bound for the same goal by a different route. Who should say which was right or which wrong, seeing that the ultimate destination was one and the same? Yet for each road to that goal—for the *method* of saving a soul, not for its salvation—the Church had fought and argued, raged and persecuted, tortured and tormented, ever since the voice of a Priesthood had uplifted itself above the simple meaning of good. Far back in the dreams of centuries lay the aspirations of prophet and priest; of teacher and ruler; of false gods dethroned and false creeds destroyed. What better was Humanity for it all? Were its sins lessened; its sufferings

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decreased; its blasphemies purged; its perplexities answered?

He looked at the massive portals of the Madeleine, at the little group before the lighted café, at the faces of the two priests. One heavy, sensual, earthly; the other morbidly ascetic, furtively rebellious. Of these, and such as these, Christianity counted her thousands and tens of thousands, no whit better or purer-minded than ordinary men, to whom manhood meant what God and Nature intended; who had not insulted creation by a pretended defiance of its laws, or turned disappointed passions into the narrow channels of bigotry.

"That young priest seems to interest you, David," he said at last.

The boy started. "I was wishing I could understand what they were saying—that I could ask him about his life."

"You will find more than one of his order and faith where you are going," said Craddock. "Religious ordinances count more than one sect, one creed, one Faith. I understand that the teachers of St. Blasius have liberal minds and include many orders. They are not forbidden to associate with each other, thus proving the founder of this seminary to be possessed of unusual judgment. However, if you would really like to know something of our young neighbour, I can speak his language well enough to inquire. Shall we hear what he thinks of Paris?"

"Oh, if you would only ask him!" cried David eagerly.

Craddock made a casual observation to the elder priest which soon had the effect of bringing interested attention to David. The conversation lasted a few moments. Then the Squire lapsed into English.

"He is from Brittany," he said to David, "just released from a first curacy in a small Breton village. The old man is his uncle. It is a convenient relationship. He has come to Paris for a brief holiday and a visit to Notre Dame, which is the Mecca of all the provincial priesthood of this country. Is that enough for you? I fear he will not give us confidences respecting his church, or his calling, because in his eyes you and I are heretics of the most heretic, and destined to be eternally damned. It

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must be a comfortable doctrine to hold, seeing that God created souls first and priests afterwards. We might therefore suppose He had a vested interest in our future state. But the arrogance of Rome places the creature first, and the Creator second. I mean, of course, the consecrated and *ordained* creature, not mere humans like ourselves."

"Pardon me," said a voice almost at his elbow. "Your definition is less logical than your subject deserves."

Craddock started, then sprang to his feet. David was already clinging to the speaker, uttering glad greetings.

"I am in advance of our arrangement," said a deep, familiar voice. "It occurred to me that Paris would be a better meeting-place. There is much I should like to show David, and we are not pressed for time. No one will be at the College for a week or two."

"But how did you find us—here?" asked Craddock.

"Paris holds a comparatively small area for the newly arrived traveller. I had not much difficulty in locating yours."

"It is delightful that you are here—and—what a transformation!" exclaimed Craddock.

"Oh! I am a civilized vagabond at times, and I own an insignificant garret in Montmartre, where I keep a suit of clothes for such occasions as these!"

He laughed gaily, and waved his hand towards the surrounding tables.

Craddock drew a chair forward. "Sit down," he said, "and let us talk. Paris is complete now."

"But we have disturbed your clerical friends—see, they're going. Grace be with them, though I found little to please me in the countenance of either. But then, the priesthood and I are sworn foes; *that* sort of priesthood. I like not what savours of intolerance. However, my wine will taste better without the flavour of the Sanctuary so close at hand."

He gave a rapid order to the waiter, then drew his chair closer and glanced at the two welcoming faces. "So you're glad to see me. But beware! I'm a veritable devil in Paris. Good broadcloth has hidden a cloven foot before to-day. Do you know, my good Squire, I

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felt sure I should find you at a café? A toleration of the infamous is inseparable from practical experiences—even to an acolyte and a philosopher."

"There is not much here to hurt—even an acolyte," said Craddock. "And a philosopher can take care of himself."

"And choose his experiences, as I found you doing?"

"It is good to hear you talking again," laughed the Squire. "As for experiences, we are not seeking them yet; or here. David has been lost in the mists of Amazement. He dropped down a moment ago at sight of those two reverend gentlemen. I was just translating their history—at least, as much of it as they communicated—when you appeared on the scene."

"I have a fancy for the unexpected. Ah! here comes my wine. Is this more to your taste than solitude, my good Squire?"

"It suits me well enough for a change. But I am still marvelling—"

"Don't waste precious opportunities. To-night we will eat and drink and rejoice in life. It is not given to many travellers to meet the pure in heart—in Paris; or to see that modern Messalina through the illusioned eyes of youth. Listen, my young Samuel. The good wine has unlocked my tongue and my brain is afire with speech. I spoke of illusion, did I not? Paris is to youth what illusion is to maturity—a promise of ecstasy never to be fulfilled. I drink to it!"

He drank another glass of wine, and leant forward across the table. "A dip in the river Styx made Achilles invulnerable save in that heel which maternal anxiety refused to release. Paris represents that river; but your sublime ignorance is the invulnerable encasement through which no arrow of mischance shall penetrate. Why—how you look! You do not recognize your Sycorax of the Cavern in this wine-bibber of the Boulevards!"

"You were never Sycorax!" exclaimed the boy. "He was a monster. You were more like Prospero—the Enchanter."

"I—an enchanter!" The whimsical face grew suddenly grave. "Powers of grace, boy. What an undeserved definition!"

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"It paints you as you seem to him," said Craddock. He leant back and lit a cigarette.

The Wanderer laughed harshly. "As I seem—as he seems—as you seem! By the gods, what frauds we are! Think, my good Squire, if an Asmodeus of the present day could lift the lids of our souls and show us to each other—as those merry sinners of Madrid were shown to an invisible spectator . . . what a spectacle! Does it ever strike you that the reason why Humanity is given so long a rope—for its ultimate hanging—is that it affords such an inexhaustible fund of amusement to its procreator? The variations formed on the original theme are endless. A comic opera is not more ludicrous, nor a Baconian tragedy more tragic. The Hamlet theory of 'cursed spite' is ever fulfilling itself in the brains of would-be reformers. Ah, my David, your young eyes are heavy with sleep, and my tongue is paying too heavy a tribute to the good red wine of Lutetia! Let us away from this dissipated spot! Or rather you must away—to the couch of innocence and the slumber of saints. Farewell!"

"But it is early yet," exclaimed Craddock. "Won't you come to the hotel with us? I have no intention of going to bed for hours."

"My good Squire, if I accompany you I shall drink more wine and talk more philosophy, and undo all the good that a week of primitive innocence has accomplished. Then I shall awake to-morrow morn with an aching head and heap maledictions upon this city, the wine and yourself! No, in the best interests of friendship we'll part now."

"We are at the Hotel Côte d'Or. Will you breakfast with us to-morrow?"

"I will. I am going to take David a pilgrimage and show him a wider field of sanctified errors than he has dreamt of in his most transcendent moments!"

"What time are we to expect you?"

"I never commit my actions to the foolish interpretation of clocks. I shall be with you as soon as you expect me."

He rose and pushed aside his chair. He seemed to mingle with the throng and disappear before Craddock had grasped the meaning of his informal leave-taking.

"I wish to God I could understand him and his ways!"

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muttered the Squire angrily. "Such a medley of farce, tragedy, and mystery I have never come across in my whole life!"

Craddock had reason to endorse, and opportunity to justify, that opinion of his strange acquaintance during the following days. He at once puzzled, irritated, and delighted him.

His method of performing what he called "pilgrimages" did more to spiritualize David's fancy than shock his Puritanism. He had, of course, been taught that the Romish Church was a synonym for Jesuitical cruelty and innumerable superstitions; for false worship and the sanctification of images, and a ritual that tended more to the deification of man than the worship of God. Men such as Zachariah Pascoe and David Perryn held the very name of Rome as an abomination; synonym of savage persecutions, overweening ambitions and spiritual apostasy. To a race of people bred and fed upon the teachings of Wesley, and the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, the word "Popery" could hold but one significance. David had heard of that word, and credited its significance long before the magnificence of ritual, and the amazing celebrations of a High Mass dazzled his senses.

His first experience of a Catholic ceremony was at Notre Dame. The air of the great cathedral was heavy with incense from swinging censers. A wonderful light swept over nave and sanctuary and altar from rose-hued windows. The voices of choir and priests and the thunders of the organ transfused all sense of meaning into the meanings of sense. He was oppressed, borne down, uplifted, entranced, and then half shamed. For he had been told this was idolatry. This bowing to an emblematic Figure, these complex genuflections, this changing of vestments and ringing of bells—did they really mean the service of Christ *as Christ ordained it*? He questioned his companion when the service was over.

"You mean as man has transformed it—for his own purposes, not as Christ ordained it? Yes, it is that and more. Did you not read ecclesiastical superiority in those holy countenances?"

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David looked troubled. "It was what I read in them that I disliked," he said.

"Possibly your instinct was correct. Yet there have been good priests—even excellent ones. But in the vast machinery of this vast system the wisest and best men are but tools in the iron hands of their superiors. Forced to work for one object; to forfeit all individuality of mind or thought. But come, I have more to show you."

He led the boy from one place of interest to another, giving in brief, terse phrases the history of the memorable building and its storied treasures of the past.

"And what are *those*?" asked David suddenly, pointing to one of the confession boxes, above which was written the name of a priest and the hours he would hear Confessions.

An expression of ironic attempt prefaced the explanation.

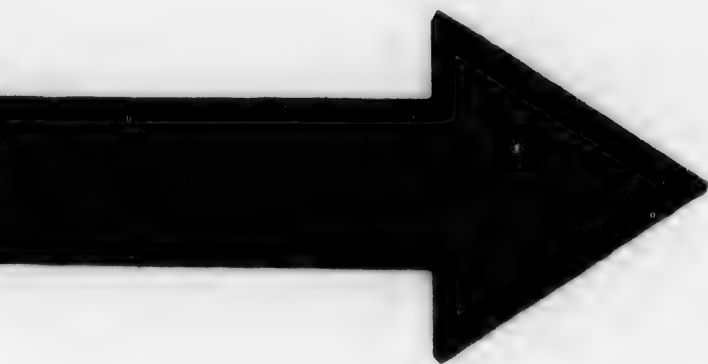
"Those? Standing records of priestly inquisition; a humiliating memorial to human weakness; the recognition of a chain whose strength is dependent on every one of its weakest links. You have never heard of Confession as a means of saving one's soul, David?"

"Oh, yes; I have heard of it." The boy stood regarding the box with its curtained gratings in interested surprise. "But why do people confess sins to man instead of to God?"

"Because the Romish Church has decreed that she is their mediator; that unless she can pry into every secret of their souls, man, wife or maid, they cannot escape the wrath of Heaven. It is a magnificent idea! It kept half the world in bondage for centuries, and made kings and kingdoms as pawns in the game of supremacy. Picture the importance of a system that can make each member of a family a betrayer of the secrets of every other member of that family. There—you have priestly power in a nutshell. Do you ask its purpose? They would tell you 'the service of God.' I call it a plot for establishing the power of man. But then I hold no brief for the Priesthood. I hate them all."

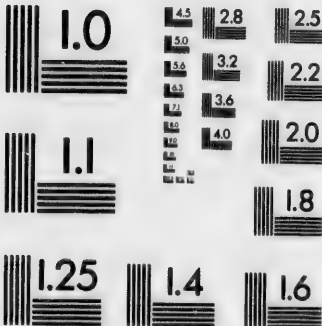
"You should not hate any one," said David gently.





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Then he added : " Shall you hate me, do you think, if ever I become a priest ? "

" *That* will depend—on the order and nature of your priesthood. I shall not hate a faithful messenger of Christ. It is those who falsify Him, lie to Him and of Him, crucify Him afresh with every torment of insult and indignity—it is those whom I hate and scorn—and yet must serve."

David repeated the words wonderingly : " Serve ? But you said you served no one ; lived your life as you pleased ! "

Those strange, mocking eyes looked down at the boy's uplifted face ; a hand lightly touched his golden curls.

" Am I not serving—you, David ? " he said.

They were joined by Craddock, and went with him to the South Tower where hangs the great *Bourdon*. There they ascended to the platform and rested, while the whole wonderful panorama of Paris unrolled itself at their feet. David was too amazed and too absorbed for speech. He could only think of this marvellous city ruled for such unworthy ends as this huge building at once consecrated and satirized. To his young mind and simple faith religion meant as yet only what it does mean to youth and simplicity—the worship of Holiness and Truth with pure soul and humble thanksgiving. All this adoration of symbols seemed but an adoration of idols.

The lighting of candles for masses to be said for departed souls was another mystery. What sort of conception of the Deity entered into such practices ? How could a few souls' worth of candles atone for a soul's errors ? Then, again, the worship of the mother of Christ seemed as essential to salvation as that of Christ himself. But David had been too well grounded in Biblical record to forget that there was very little proof *there* of any special honour paid to His earthly mother by her Son ; certainly none to show that He placed her on a spiritual equality with Himself. Had not His last action been to present her to another son ? Did not an earthly disciple take her as *his* mother ? Again, the boy reflected that the Bible taught Faith in *one* God and *one* salvation. But here there were so many ! Altars and chapels to diverse saints of

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whose very names he was ignorant ; litanies and prayers and services in their honour. Had Christ meant such things to be ? He thought of that Sermon on the Mount, the simple yet all-sufficient prayer which the Son of God had taught His disciples ; the still simpler directions for continuing His ministry and commemorating His life and sacrifice.

Where in all this was word or rule for such a Church as that of Rome ? Such a ritual as he had witnessed ?

"I know of what you are thinking," said the voice of his guide softly. "Shall I tell you ? Where does one seek the *authority* for what assumes to be the one and only True Church ? That authority is contained in a single word—a word translated into Pontifical supremacy by an error that has deluged the world with blood and fire and persecution ! But all that it has wrested for itself by such means is the institution of *Man*—not of Christ. Man whose ambition realized that no sovereignty on earth is so powerful and so supreme as the sovereignty over human souls ! No command so absolute as one embodying Divinity as its source. How easy to reap the fruits of that command ! To rule ignorance by fear ; to withhold liberty of thought and liberty of action from its proselytes ; to veil Science and control Art ; to let dread of the Unknown root itself in human minds ; to rule them by that fear translated into penance—penance which brought riches to the Church, and honour akin to royalty to its Heads and Dignitaries. Then, at last, greed and ambition reached a point of self-wrought omnipotence that represented both Earth and Heaven as its slaves, and Eternal Damnation as its prerogative. And so came the hour of downfall. Nations desired freedom, and consciences demanded liberty, and Henry of blessed memory and many wives secured to himself and his people the divine rights of both ! Sacred history in a nutshell, my child ! But I make you a present of the kernel."

David listened and pondered it all in his heart. It represented all he felt, but could not express. That inborn repugnance to spiritual *compulsion* which has made the nation that first asserted its rights to spiritual freedom the greatest in the world. For Liberty is man's natural

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heritage, and all that would prison his limbs and control his reason and fetter his tongue is an outrage on his Maker and himself !

Day followed day, and David lived each to new and vivid interests. He grew familiar with the beautiful streets and the *grands* Boulevards, the arcades and gardens of the Palais Royal, the pleasure-grounds of Vincennes and the Luxembourg. They took the river steamboats to St. Cloud and Suresnes ; they spent hours amidst the art treasures of the Louvre, though David professed no admiration for masterpieces. The only one that seemed to fascinate him was Titian's "Entombment of Christ." But he could not speak of its effects. It at once shocked him as commonplace, and awed him as spiritual. It brought before his own mind the *material* end of Christ's life, yet circumscribed his views of infinity and eternity by a pageant of lower meaning.

One evening they were sitting at supper in one of the restaurants in the Palais Royal. Craddock preferred it to the noisier and more crowded Boulevards. They had a table at an open window, and David was looking out on the scene below while Craddock talked to the Wanderer. On the morrow they were to leave Paris and continue their journey to the Austrian frontier. David was to face life under new conditions. He caught a word of the conversation, and turned to the two speakers.

"Personal affection and religious enthusiasms cannot march together." It was Craddock who spoke. He was looking at the serene calm beauty of the boy's face, and felt, as he had often felt, how very small a place human affection held in *his* heart.

"You mean they react on each other ?" said the Wanderer.

"Yes, and on their predisposing cause. Yet the heart of all faith is Love."

"But human love has very little to do with faith," was the ironic rejoinder, "save in accepting it as the essence of something that can't be proved."

He glanced at David's musing face.

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"You care very little for human friends, David—is it not so?"

"I care for you," said the boy simply.

"An irrational rejoinder. I have done nothing for you in comparison with your foster-parents, or our friend—the Squire yonder."

His keen eyes rested on the boy as if trying to read some hidden meaning in his words.

"Neither memory nor association binds us," he went on. "True, I have interfered with your life. Perhaps some day you'll upbraid me for my temerity. But in that I see no special cause for gratitude. Do you, Craddock?"

"You came into that life at a critical moment," said the Squire. "You let daylight in upon its secret chambers. That, in connection with your own surprising personality, might well awaken romantic feelings in any young and generous heart."

"But *you*—are doing more."

"How?" asked Craddock.

"I—but pointed the Way. You—are providing the Means. I wonder if we shall ever have cause to regret—the End?"



PART II
THE MEANS

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NOTHING in life is sufficient for itself. The word **ALONE** has no meaning in Creation. The whole universe is linked by one endless chain, and humanity is only one of its many links. This was the lesson that David was learning in that strange seminary to which he had been sent.

He found himself one of a crowd of boys and youths of mixed nationalities and creeds, dispositions and tastes. But each and all were here for one purpose; the study of Theology in some form. Whether under the guise of Eastern Philosophy, or Modern Creeds of Materialism, or the Sophistries and Sanctities of Christianity, the object was to study according to individual belief that particular form of religion in whose manifestation they felt interested.

The College was a vast stone building, standing in a wooded valley and shut in by the loneliness of great mountains. Everything in and about the place was conducted on principles of almost monastic simplicity. The library contained a vast collection of religious and philosophical literature; of priestly writings on ceremonial and ritual; of chronological details, ancient records, prophecies, and thought. These were classified and arranged for the young scholars. And they were taught from them and examined from them daily. The most curious characteristic of the College was that no student was admitted there who had not one object in view—priesthood in some shape or form. Whether as Missionary, or Controversialist, or Doctrinalist, he was offered full scope for his idiosyncrasies up to the age of seventeen. Then he was dismissed to the World or the Sanctuary; the Church or the Temple; the heathens of Cities, or the heathens of Savagery.

At first David was bewildered. It was like Babel, this confusion of tongues; this mixture of races; this non-

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conformity of creeds. Jews, Greeks, Hindus, Catholics, Protestants—all were gathered under one roof. All had their respective instructors.

There was no chapel, no religious service of prescribed form; but individual worship was impressed upon the student as a daily need and a daily obligation. For the rest there were hours for study; hours for meditation and recreation; books, music; walks in the depths of the wonderful forest, or to those more wonderful heights where the wild stag roamed, and the eagle had its eyrie.

To David these vast woods were as great a delight as the sea had been; and, like the sea, they held a voice of praise and mystery. A voice for ever sounding, a song for ever sad. In rosy dawns, in dreaming noontides, in the silence of night, he seemed to hear that voice and that song. The moving branches had a surf-like murmur; the green aisles echoed with restless life; the dim greenness of glades held the same depths as his beloved ocean. Only he looked through them instead of *into* them. The enchantment of this region of mountain and forest held him like a spell; deepened the mysticism of his nature, the spirituality of his mind.

Among the motley crowd of students there were but three of his own nationality. The fact of speaking the same tongue naturally drew them together. Like himself, these boys were orphaned by accident or misfortune. Two were about his own age; the third was older—in his fifteenth year. He manifested an immediate friendliness towards David, and many mutual tastes and mutual sympathies drew them together.

The strongest proved to be their admiration for the strange being to whom they owed their introduction to this scholastic retreat; the opportunity of following the bent of their own minds.

Godfrey St. Just was more practical in his ambitions than David. His father had been a cleric of that advanced school of modern Ritual, set afoot by the Oxford movement. From the time he could speak Godfrey had only recognized life as a solemn incense-haunted pageant—a thing of daily services and mystical hours, of white robes and sounding bells, and the deep swell and call of

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the organ. He was an ardent musician, and performed much of the music of the College. His father had died when the boy was but ten years of age. His mother married again: a very wealthy man. But the new stepfather made life intolerable for Godfrey. One night he stole away from home and walked for miles till he reached a seaport town in the North of England. There he fell in with some seafaring men who were just about to embark on a voyage to Barbadoes. The vessel was short-handed, and they took him as cabin-boy. His next adventure was shipwreck. The boat in which he and most of the crew had spent days and nights in mid-ocean, was at last picked up by a Spanish barque. Godfrey next found himself in Barcelona—homeless and penniless. While sitting one day in forlorn contemplation of his position, he was observed by a stranger who spoke his own language, learnt his history, and finally brought him to this Seminary in the Austrian mountains. His description of the stranger, his vagabond appearance and whimsical talk and extraordinary fascination, tallied too closely with David's Wanderer to leave any doubts as to his identity.

David's own history seemed very uneventful after this recital, but he gave it as it was, with all that confusion of dreams and visions that meant to him a Divine mission. Godfrey listened with the tolerant condonation of seniority for enthusiasms it has outlived. Ritual was in his blood, so to say, and his future was bounded only by an ambition to enter the Church and serve it as his father had done. How that could happen under present conditions he could not foresee. But he intended to take Orders as soon as was practicable. Means must be found by his mother or his stepfather. He had not told them where he was, for fear of being recalled and sent to a public school. But when the time came for leaving St. Blasius he meant to do this, and claim his rights of sonship.

A companionship so novel and so interesting naturally affected David's character. He admired his new friend's abilities, and did his best to emulate him in pursuit of knowledge. He lost some of his primitive mannerisms and unnatural reserve. On the other hand, his passion for books increased, and his prescribed hours of study were

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duplicated by his own studious habits. No one interfered with him. The bent of inclination was here the only recognized rule of tuition.

The Principal of the College was a stately, patriarchal-looking man of some sixty years. He seemed to speak all languages with equal fluency, and he had that inexplicable gift of mastery which lends importance to all that is said, or done, or taught. There were other instructors of varied nationalities as the curriculum demanded; but, by some happy faculty of organization, there was no discordant note in the universal harmony.

"We are all one family in the sight of Heaven," the Principal would say. "Loneliness, or sorrow, or poverty, or enthusiasm do but link us together in one great chain of Love: the Divine Love that breathes in us and through us, and must one day draw us back to Itself."

And this creed was the only one of which they heard, and which linked them in an amicable and useful Brotherhood, where bigotry and superstition found no resting-place.

No women were admitted to the College. Its domestic affairs were managed by a staff of boys under superintendence of a stern major-domo. The cooking was of the simplest and plainest description. Garden and orchard and pasture supplied all needs; for austere simplicity was one of the strictest rules. The students worked in the garden if they had a taste for it; milked the cows and goats, and led them out to pasture; gathered fruit for the simple meals, and enjoyed those meals all the more because of their part in the preparation. Underneath a sense of obligation, marked out as a duty, there yet lay an amount of liberty; liberty that made each task a pleasure, or touched it with a sense of responsibility to the general commune. No duty, whether of the household or the study, was rendered monotonous by an enforced routine. Each week or month brought a change to the respective task of the individual. Thus his mind was never burdened, or his body wearied. And not the simplest office he performed was left unnoticed or unpraised, according to its merits. Emulation never degenerated into rivalry, and the earliest lessons taught were those of self-denial

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and mutual appreciation. By Nature's own law of attraction mind is lifted to kindred mind, and taste to kindred taste. Yet an unknown ever-watchful care intervened between any marked sentimentality that might have become dangerous, and that sense of hero-worship to which youth is so prone.

Physical science had its part also in this training-house. Nature's laws and instincts were explained with a healthy forcefulness that acted as pruning knife to unhealthy tendencies. The laws of cause and effect were marked clearly both as danger chart and guide. No student could leave that Seminary without a safeguard of morality and spirituality. Evil thoughts, perverted minds, erratic impulses were met by stern rebuke, kindly counsel; and if found unconquerable by such means, the black sheep was sent from out the fold to indulge or suffer for his follies.

"I am not here to play Providence, my son," the kindly patriarch would say. "I can but express what seems to me Divine Will, and point out the penalty for its defiance. Experience must be your next teacher, since folly is your sole excuse for disobedience."

Then a day would come when a vacant seat, a vacant place at meals, spoke of an absentee, and the students knew that one of them had "been tried and found wanting."

For one whole year David had lived this life—the lovely tranquil life of the ardent student.

From the first he had been remarked by the Principal, and, unknown to himself, surrounded by a tender and pure-souled guardianship. His friendship with Godfrey St. Just met with approval. For the wise Head of the Seminary recognized in it the elements of difference and the inner consciousness of agreement that constitute a healthy intimacy. The boy had grown from a dreamer to a realist. He had found a basis for Faith, and with eager hands began to build on it the edifice that dreams had crystallized in his soul.

Twelve months of valuable teaching, of carefully directed study, had worked wonders. His friendship with a more practical mind had also served its purpose in the scheme

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of things. Physically and mentally, David at fourteen years of age was better equipped for his Mission to souls than nine-tenths of the Divinity students who enter Oxford or Cambridge. He had had no useless knowledge to eject, and only a serious, simple, and *essential* amount to assimilate. With a definite idea in his own mind of what he wanted, he had worked for that idea in a direct and purposeful fashion. There was no doubt that three more such years of study and research would be no mean equipment for that mission of evangelization which was the day-star of his young ambition; a star for ever shining on the horizon of Hope, for ever beckoning him to some magical region of achievement.

During this year the boy had received occasional letters from the Squire of Trebarwick, and one or two, badly expressed but fondly written, from little Ruth. To both he had sent rapturous descriptions of his life and his utter content with it.

The time was now approaching for the long vacation. The College was always closed in July and August. When David had first come there no one had received him except the old librarian, who never left it. Such students as had no homes to go to made up walking parties, and camped out in the forests or among the mountains.

David was expected home, and was torn between duty and inclination. Godfrey was urging him to come on the walking tour, and the boy ardently longed to do so. On the other hand, Ruth wrote of the old fisher folks' anxiety to see him. At the crucial moment a letter came from the Squire asking him to stay at Trebarwick and bring his school friend also. Money was sent for the journey and distinct directions given. This seemed to David a happy way out of his difficulties. He asked Godfrey's opinion, and after some discussion they agreed to banish the idea of the tramp and go to England together. Once decided, David's eloquence let itself loose over the glories and wonders of his beloved coast. It seemed to him that he had never realized the loss of the sea until he was about to return to it.

They had not been allowed to stay in Paris, but passed straight from station to station. At the London terminus

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they made their first halt, and spent the night at the Paddington Hotel, where Craddock had engaged rooms for them. They left by the early train, and, to David's astonishment, were met at Plymouth by Craddock himself. The Squire gave them luncheon, and only when they were in the Cornish train and meeting the usual vexatious delays of single-line monopoly, did he mention the real reason of his appearance.

"I have some bad news for you, David," he said abruptly. "There has been a fatality in the village. A few nights ago some of the men were out, and one of those sea fogs we know, came on. They seem to have lost their reckoning. In any case, the boat never turned up. This morning, soon after daybreak, three bodies were washed ashore. One of them was that of your foster-father, David Perryn. His wife is overwhelmed with grief. I fear it will be a melancholy homecoming for you."

David had grown very white. Death was as yet only a name; it had not come into any personal experience. The thought of that strong, kindly man lying *dead* in his familiar home, was at first unrealizable. That he would never receive the kindly greeting, hear the rough Cornish voice calling his name, seemed so strange a thing to grasp as calamity and the sea had grasped it.

"*Dead!*" he repeated. "David Perryn dead! I can't believe it."

"It is true," said the Squire. "And I'm afraid your foster-mother expects you to stay with her. She is all alone, you see."

"Of course I will stay!" exclaimed the boy. "She must be so lonely."

"The funeral will be the day after to-morrow," said Craddock. "I—I made all the arrangements. It is always best to expedite such matters. After all, mourning is but an exaggerated sentiment. The first shock of the inevitable is also the last. All else is but a morbid persistence in the self-indulgence of grief."

David said nothing. He was trying to picture the vivid personality he had known, as suddenly extinct: something gone, passed into nothingness; only a memory and a regret. He could not do it. A curious restlessness over-

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took him. He felt as if that which *had been* must still be ; might even now stand as an unseen messenger at his side, trying to give him welcome, bidding him not to grieve.

The Squire left him to himself for a while and talked to Godfrey of the country around ; of the College life ; of his own strange history of which David had told him. The boy had attracted him at once. His very contrast to David was an interest. Besides, it seemed odd that two such apparently dissimilar characters should be united by a predilection for the same office. Godfrey, on his side, was studying his friend's benefactor from the point of view of mere curiosity. David had often dwelt on the sudden birth of that interest in himself which had so widened the horizon of his life. As Godfrey looked at Craddock and listened to his cynical remarks, he found himself wondering why he had chosen to play at philanthropy. He certainly gave no impression of being charitably inclined to humanity at large. When he touched upon religious matters, as was inevitable when the College came into discussion, he treated them as a general influence more than a practical necessity.

"Most people believe in religion," he said, "because it's too much trouble to think about it. It is only when they *do* think that they cease to believe."

"What, exactly, do you mean by religion ?" asked Godfrey.

"What the word represents to all who study life. The science of spirituality, either forced or assumed ; the routine of churches ; the fear of something worse to happen than we already know *has* happened, and to avoid which we try to make terms with an unknown Tyrant, of whose actions we are not very sure."

"Do you call that—religion ?"

"I call it what I see practised in the name of religion. I don't know what form of it you have assimilated at your Seminary, but the root is always the same."

"We are *taught* no form. We evolve that for ourselves," said Godfrey. "But surely the essence of all religion is the worship of something Greater, holier, purer than mere humanity."

The Squire smiled. "Have you ever thought of the

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primary cause for that desire? It means going a long way back, of course; even further than our mythical Garden of Eden. Man in his primeval condition was something of a savage,* and as a savage was influenced by all that appealed to his primitive senses. Fear was possibly the strongest of these senses; fear of all that could not be explained: calamities brought by flood or fire; thunderstorms, eclipses, earthquakes. Any of these affected him with terror, because they exemplified some Power stronger than his own, and whose object seemed that of persecution or calamity. To pacify that Power would naturally occur to him. We may take it that he and his brother savages occasionally had fallings out, and inflicted injuries upon each other. We may even conclude that the weaker tried to pacify the stronger with gifts, or peace-offerings. Well, argue from that, that our forefathers applied the same reasoning to that inexplicable Force which destroyed their fields and their cattle, and wrought havoc upon their rude attempts at agriculture; an offering, a pacification, an atonement. Here you get the *crux* of natural religion: the idea of a special sacrifice at a special place, undertaken first by the sufferer himself, later by the intervention of a more enlightened order of beings who called themselves priests. I hope I'm not too personal?"

"Oh, no!" said Godfrey. "Of course, I have read up to this mode of reasoning in rationalistic treatises. But I am not narrow-minded. My view of faith or of ritual is one of personal inclination. The belief that they *may* be good, and that the world badly needs being done good to."

"I suppose it does. It always has needed it. And the institution of a class of men to do that good has also seemed a necessity. The religious development of mankind is one of the strangest and most interesting studies. But, you may take it from me, that to go back far enough is to find the root implanted in the primitive elements of Fear, and Propitiation. These two elements have worked through all the forms and creeds of Faiths for which mankind has suffered and tormented himself—and others. It is the secret of Conversion; the secret of Missionizing;

* *The Corruption of the Church.* Alfred Momerie.

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a secret that has served the vilest ends as well as the Holiest."

"Would you have no spiritual directors, no Preachers or Priests—no visible Church?" asked Godfrey.

Craddock shrugged his shoulders. He glanced over to where David was sitting, wrapped in his own thoughts and gazing out at the flying landscape.

"I would have Truth—if it could be preached; and a Church that moved, intellectually and scientifically, with the age. But such things stand apart from man's self-importance, and no such Church will ever be founded."

Godfrey looked thoughtfully at the speaker. David had said little about him except that he seemed an irreligious man, and believed neither in Christ nor Church. Then why had he elected to play guardian to the boy's vocation?

Godfrey, after that last speech, was trying to account for such a seeming contradiction of opinion and action. Had the speaker some such church in view as his words described; one whose Founder would be his debtor in all things appertaining to its establishment? If so, it struck him that David would be no malleable tool. The innate spirituality of his friend was as a rock-crystal in purity and in substance: something set and centred in his nature, impossible to discolour, and seemingly impossible to break.

"Do you really think the Church of to-day has ceased to preach Truth, and has lost Faith?" he said at last. "It is long since I have attended any set service. We have no established form of worship at the College, you know."

"Ah! tell me about that," said Craddock eagerly. "There must be a curious medley of sects there!"

"Somehow they all agree," answered Godfrey. "Dr. Von Klausthal, our Principal, has a wonderful method of fusing diversity into a common union. After all, it is the best thing to believe in one Beginning, one Creator, one Force, to which we owe existence, and to which we return as part of itself. I know there are men who want to drag down Heaven to Earth, and make it material instead of spiritual, but I, and David there"—he looked across to

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the grave young face at the opposite window—"we think that the better way is to try and raise Earth up to Heaven."

"It can never be done," said Craddock. "But it is a beautiful dream for spiritual-minded youth. I envy you *that!*"

"What?" asked Godfrey. "Being young, and groping one's way as we're doing. I don't see much to envy."

"Possibly not. We never value what we possess—at the time of possession. I led the life of a Bedouin once in the heart of the desert. It seemed to me the acme of discomfort. Now I am condemned to the boredom of the civilized British landowner, and I sigh for the desert, and the simple excitement of tent and dust-storms. We are supposed to be rational creatures, we men. It is a wrong definition. We are many things—sometimes two or three at one and the same moment—but we are never rational."

He turned towards David. "Won't you come over here and talk to us?" he said gently. "It is a year since I parted from you. I can see it has altered you in many ways."

II

DAVID stood in the familiar cottage, held by loving arms, wept over by tears of joy and sorrow mingling in the vortex of feminine emotions.

Little Ruth held one hand and gazed wonderingly up at his face. How tall he had grown; how much more manly he looked, and yet how beautiful his face still was! Rachel Perryn sobbed her grief for her dead husband into his ears, alternately with expressions of joy that he had come home to be her comforter and take the dead man's place.

That announcement startled the boy out of his momentary tenderness and sympathy. To take up the old life; to follow his foster-father's calling? Such an idea had never entered his head! He drew away from the loving arms that had been cradle and comfort to his helpless childhood. He looked at the tear-stained face, then at the poor and humble cottage. Surely—surely she could not mean what she said? could not expect that he would ever again become a fisherman, and lead a fisherman's life? But in this first hour of grief and abandonment he could not say what he felt. It was his duty to console the poor woman's grief, and he set himself to do that.

They led him to the dead man's side. They drew aside the covering, and he looked with a sudden sense of horror at the garb and countenance of Death. It was a great shock. The fisherman's brow was discoloured by a huge bruise where he had been dashed against the rocks. His face bore no likeness to the ruddy, weather-beaten visage David remembered. In that moment Death looked a horrible and relentless monster; one who for no seeming purpose had snatched this honest life from use and helpfulness, and turned it into a thing of cold and callous immovability.

"Won't 'ee say a prayer aside o' him, David? Do—

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dear life!" entreated the weeping Rachel. But the boy, with a sudden choking terror, only threw back the covering over the dead face, and rushed from the room.

Prayer? Prayer to *that*, or about *that*? It was impossible. He could not realize Death—yet; could not disassociate physical feelings and passions from the stony silence that had confronted him. He almost resented the sight he had been forced to regard. Why had his mother done this? Why had she not let them take away that dreadful shell of humanity, and leave him to his remembrance of the warm, living life it had represented?

He threw himself on his knees by his old familiar bed in the little low-roofed room, and, burying his face in his hands, cried out for help—for explanation. Fragments of Scripture, familiar texts, swept to his mind, but they seemed meaningless apart from any possible conception of Finality.

The finality of *Life*. The horrible transformation of it into what his shuddering soul had just beheld. Half the force of scriptural allusion is lost when we are unable to realize the position of the speakers or actors in the drama. And to David the cries of woe had no connection with the consoling fragments that serve as epitaphs for tombstones.

The instinct of grief is to bemoan a loss, not to turn aside for consolation. For what consolation is there for Death? It is so relentless—so inaccessible. And of the Afterwards who has told? From what authority have we *absolute certain truth* of what happens? Where the thing we loved has gone? Why and by what means it leaves us desolate and unanswered, when our hearts are breaking in anguish for its loss?

From none.

Let priests say what they will, let Church and Sanctuary explain as they may, there is one secret kept from all; from the King as from the beggar; from the Pope on his apostolic throne to the humblest devotee of self-sacrifice. It is the secret of the Closed Door.

Behind that Closed Door none shall penetrate until it is closed upon themselves. From its other side no messenger, no speech, no comfort has ever issued, that is too reliable for Doubt.

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True, Faith vanquishes such doubt by some abnormal method of visualized spirituality; true, that Church and Priest tell of "hope beyond the tomb," and paint celestial blessedness to the best of finite abilities; but it is only faith; it is only hope; it is not Certainty.

In the chaos of his mind David tried to recall visions of spiritual messengers. Winged Hopes that had borne him to the shores of the invisible world. But though such things had seemed real and possible at the time, they refused to fit in now with that grim figure below.

"He will not come back; he will never speak to me again! For days and nights *that* has been lying in the cold sea. Where was he all that time? Where^{is} he now?"

So ran his thoughts as he knelt in the little bare room, and faced for the first time the actual mystery of eternal loss. How could one be sure of meeting again the beings one had known and loved on earth?

He recalled the histories of past ages; of past centuries. Where were all those dead and vanished millions? How amongst them could one hope to find just that special soul one had loved as one's own; held so dear and precious that with its loss, life was valueless evermore? "How?" the boy cried out. "How? Oh, God! tell me—show me! Help me!"

"Through a glass darkly, but then face to face." Paul had said that. Paul the apostate. Paul breathing threatenings and slaughters against the followers of Christ, and then struck down and converted into one of His most ardent disciples!

But how did Paul *know*? He wrote this in a letter—as one writes something one feels and believes. But to those who don't feel and don't believe the fact is unconvincing. They, too, turn and question. "A fact must be provable to be certain. What proof have you?"

The boy went over remembered phrases; remembered chapters. The familiar story of the Thief on the Cross; the words he had so often wondered at: "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."

To-day? Yet Christ had not ascended till three days afterwards!

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He had not gone to Paradise, but to preach to the spirits in Hell. He was seen again on earth. He was touched and spoken to—and spoke. "*To-day* shalt thou be with *Me*," could not have meant what it appeared to mean; recognition, or meeting in Heaven.

He had never thought such thoughts before. He had accepted the future life as a sort of transition from the present. But then he had not been confronted with visible Death. He rose suddenly and went to the familiar little window, and looked out over the sea.

It was calm and beautiful now. Yet how cruel it had been! It had had no mercy on the toiling, useful life that had loved it and lived with it so long. There it rolled and sang and gleamed under the warm sunset, as it had always done. Was the sea of more importance than man? At least, it existed and continued while he suffered and died. Generations of human lives had been born and forgotten, but the sea was there, the same as in the Beginning: the beautiful, treacherous, insatiable, untiring thing that was unlike all else, and yet embodied the whole of Creation's meaning; the generating of Life; the supporting of Life; and the destruction of Life.

Its voice stole to him, calling with the resistless spell of old. He felt he must go to it. Perhaps *there* he would find his answer; the reason of its mission and its cruelty.

He ran down the ladder-like stairs. Rachel Perryn was in the kitchen as he passed through. "Where be 'ee goin' to, David?" she cried.

"On the sea—to my boat," he answered. "I'll be back soon."

She sat there staring after the lithe, swift figure, amazed at his quick departure, at the seeming heartlessness of his manner. For twelve long months she had not seen him, and now he was out and away, having given no account of his doings during that year! She shed a few tears as women will; tears of sorrow and loss and incomprehension. She had looked to the arrival of her boy as the one ray of comfort in this desolation, but he had seemed like a stranger. He would not even pray!

David found his boat in the old place. It had been

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carefully looked after during his absence; caulked and painted freshly for his expected return. There was no one about. He got in and rowed himself out to sea, and then lay idly rocking on the long, slow swell of the waves. Afar in the golden haze the beautiful Mount lifted itself in familiar greeting. He recalled the scene for which it stood as reminder. Not a year yet since he had slept at its base, and beheld as in a dream that wonderful Figure, and answered its lament by a vow that had changed his whole life.

"I must keep it," he told himself. "I cannot live here and become a mere fisherman."

He looked down into the deep, deep waters. He lost himself as of old in the strange mystery of their movement and their song.

His heart was heavy and ill at ease; he felt a consciousness of failure. The war between duty and inclination had begun, and he had decided for—inclination. Then he resolved to throw the onus of decision on his benefactor. Surely he would see that Rachel Perryn was provided for; that she need not depend on him, or consign him to the precarious livelihood of these fishermen around. He seized his oars, and rowed to the little sheltered cove where he had met the Wanderer. Oh, that he were there now! That his counsel were at his service, and his help at hand! But the cove was desolate and the cavern empty.

He threw himself down on the warm sands and gazed long and silently up at the wonderful tints of the evening sky. What went on there? Did angels live behind that blue and golden canopy, and was God's throne set amidst its splendid mystery? Was David Perryn there—wandering through its spaces, lost amidst celestial loveliness? He could not picture the rough fisherman in white, flowing raiment; sweeping through space with wondrous wings; praising God on a harp, with a new gift of melody in his voice. Yet these were the gifts of Heaven. He had been told so. He had read of them in the Revelation of St. John, that wonderful series of dream-visions which the Church has interpreted as symbolical of the Future Life.

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Lying there, his face propped on his hands and his eyes searching the vast immensity of sky and sea, David's thoughts grew more and more perplexed. This last year had changed everything. He seemed to hold a separate individuality from that of the dreaming, unpractical child who had lived a life of his own, and deemed himself chosen by God for His special service. Suddenly as he lay there he was conscious of a feeling of horrible loneliness; of being a single helpless atom in a great blank void; of trying to wrest that atom from surrounding nothingness; of making it a visible, important thing that demanded notice—that cried to the Infinite: "O Void, from whence I came, tell me my purpose here? Tell me why I am, and what is thy will with me?"

But there was no answer. He kept quiet for a long, long time. Then he half rose and knelt on the sands, and bent his ear to listen to the voice of the sea. How sad it seemed, and yet how strong! How much it also knew of loneliness and pain, and vain effort. Was that what made it a rebel? He recalled the Angel's words: "*A rebel hast thou been, and a rebel still thou art, and they who love thee ever rue thy love.*"

The boy's voice rang out suddenly in a cry of longing: "Oh! I want to know so much—so much! And I am only lowly, and ignorant, and foolish! Where can I learn? How shall I know? The life of the body is so short, and that of the soul so long. Is the one to suffer for the sins of the other through all Eternity?"

But through the silence swept only the moan of the sea—the endless, endless plaint that none can still, or comprehend.

"David!" cried a voice, deep and solemn as the sea's mystery. "Why are you here? Is not your mission one of consolation to the mourner, not of idle dreams?"

The boy sprang to his feet; his face aglow, his lips parted in eager welcome. "Oh! is it *you*? Really and truly you? Now—I shall know what it all means."

He was kissing the hands he had seized in a sort of rapture of greeting. Sorrow, loneliness, doubt were all forgotten.

"What *what* means? What is puzzling you? I had

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not expected to find you here. You should be playing comforter to your foster-mother by all laws of natural affection ! ”

“ I—I could not stay there ! ” cried David, releasing the hands and looking up with the old adoring wonder at the face he loved best on earth. “ It was horrible ! ” he went on. “ I had never seen any one I knew—dead.”

“ But did not your faith help you ? Has not this past year taught you that the mystery of Life goes hand in hand with the mystery of Death, and that both mean the perpetual tragedy of our undesirable existence ? ”

“ I had never realized Death,” the boy repeated. “ I could not imagine anything so horrible—and so *still*.” He shuddered. “ But how is it you are here ? ” he went on rapidly. “ You told me we should not meet again for four years.”

“ Unless you wanted me. But I felt you wanted me. This catastrophe was not reckoned with, was it ? I came to see whether you were going to play the part of the dutiful son ; take up the duties and life of the dead man who stood to you as father.”

“ That is what has been puzzling me,” exclaimed David. “ I never thought of such a thing until mother suggested it. Ought I to do it ? ” His face was troubled. Irresolution struggled with the sorrow in his voice.

“ You *ought* to do it—yes. By all laws of duty and self-sacrifice, and other beautiful and unpleasant human virtues ! Gratitude should at this moment be playing a prominent part in your thoughts, and your future should only be bounded by a stern impulse to do what you would hate doing, what you are unfitted for doing, and yet what you feel called upon to do because of these very reasons. There is nothing in life so disagreeable as duty—or so misunderstood.”

“ That does not help me,” said David. “ I want to know if my duty lies *here* at home, or if I am still free to carry out the plans you made for me ? ”

“ Did you like your life at the College ? It has changed you, I can see.”

“ Like it ? It was splendid ! ” exclaimed the boy. “ Every day, every hour has been a joy to me ! ”

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"And the old life—here—has lost all charm by contrast?"

David was silent for a moment, his eyes on the sea, that breathed a caressing murmur at his feet.

"Not *that*," he answered softly. "Never that! I love it as much as ever. But——"

"You needn't explain. The obligations attending your life under yonder humble roof do not appeal to you any longer. Yet you might live here, and preach as you pleased—possibly possess a deeper influence by reason of associations. It would be a humble career—true, but a useful one; a *safer* one, perhaps."

David looked up into the face of the speaker. There was a mocking light in his eyes, but his face was unusually grave. It seemed to hold a sort of anxiety, so the boy thought, as if waiting on a response far more momentous than its challenge.

"I mean to preach here," came the awaited answer; "all the country over, as Wesley did. I want no set service or special church; only to speak God's message under God's own sky. But—the time is not yet. I feel that. I never knew how ignorant I was till I began to study the wisdom of great minds and learn the thoughts of great thinkers. Now—I am only thirsting for more knowledge. It would break my heart to lose that chance you promised me; three years more of the life I have just left."

"So far the experiment has been successful, then? What of this friend you have made? Is he of kindred tastes?"

"Yes. But he has chosen the Church: the orthodox form of Holy Orders. He is an enthusiast for ritual. To me such things seem insignificant beside the One Great Truth."

"But the world at large will not come to hear the One Great Truth, unless its ears are tickled with pleasant sounds, and its eyes dazzled with pomp and splendour! Man is of the lower order of things—evolved from the Beasts that perish, and not half so noble or so faithful as those same Beasts in my humble opinion. Remember this, David; you can only bring to any phase of life, or

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form of art, what is in yourself. The noblest beauty that earth can show to human eyes is no more than just *what* those eyes choose to see. Your efflorescent spirituality will only appeal to those akin to your spirit. To others it may be a wonder, an enthusiasm, a short-lived ecstasy, but no more! The professing priest, or the true servant of Heaven, can only influence those who choose to be influenced. Fear, curiosity, anxiety, emptiness of life drive many stray sheep into the fold of the Church. So does expediency. But beneath profession and protestation lie but the slime and loathesomeness of the prehistoric man. His desire for self-gratification, his cowardice, his revengefulness. To get at these and root them out and crown the dismantled edifice with a new completeness is beyond the power of any Creed, or any Church! If it were *not*, the world would be a very different thing to-day from the vicious spectacle it presents! But we have strayed from our starting-point. Let us get back. You will not be a fisher of the sea. It is still the "Fisher of Men" that attracts you? Well, I never go back on a promise. You shall have the full four years of education agreed upon. I will come back with you now and make things right for your foster-mother. She will grieve, no doubt. But that is a mother's fate. All her love is thrown back on herself. Rarely is it valued, rarely understood. Even Mary of blessed memory, learnt *that* lesson."

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III

DAVID PERRYIN was laid to rest in the little wind-swept churchyard above the sea he had loved and braved all his useful, kindly life. The whole village followed his coffin as the stalwart Cornishmen bore it up the cliff, and along the hot and dusty road.

David and Rachel walked side by side, and Godfrey St. Just was behind them walking with little Ruth and Zachariah Pascoe. The simple ceremony had in it that element of tragedy attending all seafaring life. So little seems to stand between the seas of Time and that greater one of Eternity. At any moment, any hour, the mystery may be faced; the borderland crossed.

As the little procession moved homewards to face again the risks and dangers they had just commemorated, a great gloom and heaviness fell upon them. The childhood, youth, and manhood of their buried comrade had been a part of themselves and their lives. He was the head of them all; a simple, God-fearing, industrious man, and his fate seemed cruel and uncalled for. The two comrades who had shared his boat and perished in its wreck had not yet been found. Doubtless they were beyond recognition now. Both were married and had children. Their loss meant distress and hardship to the innocent beings left behind. It seemed a cruel fate and an undeserved one.

David thought of it as he walked back with Rachel Perryn, and helped her to get her simple belongings together. For she was to leave the cottage and hold the position of lodge-keeper at Trebarwick Hall. Her future was so far assured; and an intense relief was in the boy's mind. He was not called upon to sacrifice mind for body; mental for physical necessities.

Rachel had heard the decision meekly, and accepted it

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in the same spirit. After all, David was not her own son. She could not expect that he should prove more true to his adopted calling than to his natural instincts.

Deep as was his passion for the sea, it carried with it no predilection for the toil and hardships connected with a fisherman's life. His innate refinement and spirituality shone clear as a lamp's flame through all enveloping obscurity. This one year had wrought a magical difference in the boy, and the poor Cornish woman's love held something now of awe and adoration. She felt that for some unexplained reason she had been privileged to foster a young saint. And when David talked with her or read to her, or bestowed on her any of that passing tenderness boyhood condescends to offer motherhood, her whole heart thrilled with pride and joy. She felt that he was called to a life she could never touch, or even imagine. Every year would widen the difference between them, lifting him higher above her comprehension, though never above her love. Every year—first those of education and separation, then those of vocation. But she felt that none of these could rob her of her first possession of the child; of the memory of his clinging arms, his babbling, broken words, his faltering steps that she had guided and protected; his first prayers, his first teaching. Like all bruised and abused motherhood, she treasured these things in her heart; seeing still in the boy the helpless infant, hearing even in the echo of manlier tones the first pretty prattle that had been music to her ears.

David, in gratitude for the release he had scarcely hoped for, was more attentive and devoted to her than he had ever been. It seemed quite a familiar thing to see him and his friend in her pretty lodge parlour; to give them tea and Cornish cakes, and Cornish cream, and the simple, homely fare the boy had known of old. She liked David's friend, and frankly showed her liking. There was a gaiety and *bonhomie* about the lad that David lacked; also a spirit of adventurousness that appeals to feminine minds.

On the whole, those two holiday months were a pleasant experience for both the boys. Craddock unbent to genial companionship, and in his interest in their vivid intelligence almost forgot to be cynical at its expense. The only

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drop of bitterness in that cup of simple pleasures was supplied by the abrupt departure of the Wanderer. As soon as David's affairs were settled he disappeared again; giving no excuse, taking no farewell, and making no promise of any meeting nearer at hand than that previous appointment for David's seventeenth birthday. The birthday of his finding and adoption—the only one he knew.

The boys spent much of their time on the sea; sailing, or rowing, or fishing; exploring the many coves and caverns; excursionizing to the numerous spots of beauty and places of interest that make the Cornish coast an endless delight. Sometimes Craddock would accompany them. But oftener he left them to themselves. In those long days and summer nights the garden and the open air made life an outdoor, not a conventional, thing. Sometimes they had music, and both Craddock and David would listen with delight to Godfrey's wonderful playing and wonderful voice. Then there would be long talks, and dissertations on the subject nearest their heart. Craddock loved to draw out their enthusiasms and contrast them with their crude knowledge of the *inner* meaning of such things. Sometimes he would read to them from works at once subtle and unanswerable; explain embryonic processes of thought; show up bizarre contrasts of superstition and ignorance, strange creeds of mingled truth and falsehood; mythology, Jewish bigotry, Romish arrogance. The wars of the Intellect and the Soul all had their place on those crowded shelves, and added their quota of confusion to the general fabric of human knowledge. Portions and extracts were greedily absorbed and assimilated by the young brains into which life was pouring a restless eagerness for experience.

"Don't be too eager," cautioned the Squire. "Nothing we know is too certain for doubt. The bed-rock of Knowledge is not always as steadfast as it looks. Common experiences of life we feel to be inevitable, but apart from those experiences may lie unexplored fields of mystery. The hard part of all is that no individual life is half or a quarter long enough to explore even *one* field thoroughly. Then accident or catastrophe of some sort checks it midway, or engulfs it in the nothingness of Death. The

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highest philosophy can only console us by saying that such accidents and barriers *may* be of some possible good ; but we don't want possibilities, we want realities—and we don't get them ; at least, not in this uncomfortable and mismanaged world ! Thought is an ocean vast as that encircling our globe ; but its waters break on shores of pain and doubt. Here and there some kindred thought touches another, even as the shipwrecked touch a rock or reef. Life clings desperately to promised safety. But on the rock there is no water, and on the reef no food, and the poor derelict is as badly off as when the ocean first engulfed him."

It said much for youth's enthusiasm that it sailed buoyantly over all such arguments, or escaped the fatal quagmires of doubt. Possibly that element of spirituality at which the Squire so often wondered, was as yet too impersonal and too strong for question or for hair-splitting. Besides, if others had been wrong, these two young reformers were to be right. To show the Way ; to preach the Crusade as no one in or out of Orders had yet preached it. The shining ideal of a New Jerusalem, to be founded by themselves on one broad area of spirituality, was an ideal they never lost sight of. Pure and bright as the Day Star of Hope, it shone in the horizon of their future.

Craddock watched them with a sullen wonderment. He recalled his own youth ; the youth of all manhood, when the senses awaken and the mysteries of life are fraught with a passionate desire for indulgence. How was it that these lads escaped both the prurience of evil curiosity, and the allurements of easy vice ? He had sounded Godfrey to meet only indignant repudiation. As for David, sex had as yet no meaning, and the subtle chords of emotionalism were only roused to discord by evil suggestions. It was a singular fact, but it was an undeniable one. The pulse and passion of youth were here, but not its animalism. The senses could not defile the soul, nor the body corrupt the intellect.

As a vivisectioner handles the scalpel, so did Craddock handle these unconscious subjects ; submitting them to tests and temptings, yet persistently baffled, not by ignorance, but indifference. He could not resist the fascination

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of this study. He tried, as others have tried, to fathom the mystery between psychical and physical impulses; to trace the birth of the one in the maturity of the other. But he confessed himself baffled. These souls were seated on a higher throne than he could reach. The shadow-house of Sin had not yet claimed them for tenants.

He recalled the explanation of that unconventional College which had been given him in Paris; a place where each student had but one object and mission; to teach others what he felt to be true in himself. As for the training and its method, these boys had shown him how wise a one it was. To Craddock—with what Craddock knew of the usual Divinity student's training—in certainly seemed to have worked for one object, and worked well. He thought of the two great English Universities. Oxford, that depressing and mediæval refuge of "lost causes and impossible beliefs"; and Cambridge, with its laxity and luxury and free-thought. He recalled the lives their young pseudo-Christians led as preparation for God's ministry; the wine-parties, the drinking bouts; the escapades and immoralities, the debts and extravagances by which they prepared themselves to become Teachers of Men; examples of spiritual life! He found himself wondering whether in either case the system was at fault? In the one, experience was thrust into the hands of ignorance as a necessary weapon for life's warfare; in the other, temptation was proved to have no ethical value, and the psychological phenomenon of purity crystallized life into a seemingly impregnable fortress. Conscience played a more active part than curiosity. The sensuous instincts were not denied, but they were appointed their proper place in the scheme of things. They became an interest of the future, that Time would place or satisfy.

Of course, Craddock recognized that only exceptional natures could accept such teaching or profit by its wisdom. But, as far as he could learn, that curious admixture of races and creeds all possessed this substratum of spirituality, more or less ready for development. The marvel was how they all drifted to that one spot; dropped into a natural setting of defined psychology. He half made up his mind to visit the College again; to interview that re-

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markable President whose praises were so constantly sung, and whose system spoke for itself.

He was astonished at the extraordinary difference his acquaintance with David had made in his life. How vivid its interests had grown. With what eagerness he looked forward to that time when the semi-finished product of his guardianship should burst upon an astonished world as a modern Savonarola! It amused him to think how he could work those springs of astonishment; how his wealth and influence might aid the young enthusiast even to the founding of a new Church to fit a new Preacher.

But would the enthusiasm last? Would that religious passion kindle other souls and affect other lives, and wake the world from spiritual lethargy to a sense of higher duties and nobler ideals?

He wondered? He didn't believe it possible. The world had grown blind and deaf to all save its own pleasures and follies. It worshipped but one god; one with an added letter to the name; a single letter. But it made all the difference between the mammon of unrighteousness and the cult of good.

"Well, we shall see," he told himself at this point of speculation, and then went to his bookshelves, and wondered if he should try the effect of some writer more daring and more unscrupulous than had yet played the unworthy part of assailant.

To his credit's sake, be it said, he resisted for once. It was the last evening of their holiday. He resolved to leave them in peace.

The boys were wandering in the garden in the flooding light of the August moon. Godfrey had been making David tell him that story of the vision on the Mount. He had repeated it with the same certainty of its meaning; of his call to fulfil a mission—directed and ordained.

In the clear golden light his face wore an almost unearthly beauty. He lost himself once more in that bewildering memory; thrilled with rapture and impatience of the coming time when he should speak as he would be told to speak; when the live coal of inspiration should be lifted from God's altar and laid upon his lips.

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"You are not sorry to go back?" asked Craddock, coming suddenly to their side. They were standing in the opening of the glade that showed the sea and the strange, crouching rock, set in this frame of arching boughs.

Godfrey started. "Oh—it's you? I can answer for myself. I am very sorry to leave here. It has been a splendid time. But all the same——"

The Squire laughed. "You are certainly exemplary products of modern culture, you and David; anxious for learning instead of trying your best to evade it."

"Have you not said that life is not half long enough for all we want and ought to know?"

"Not a millionth part long enough, if this life were all," said Craddock.

David turned quickly. "What do you mean by that?" he asked.

"More than I can explain, or you understand. But if you wish to glean something of my meaning, ask any of those young Orientals of whom you have spoken, what Buddha preached ere ever Christ was heard of. The possibilities of Faith are endless. From Pagan suggestiveness down to Ritualistic self-delusion there is no end to what has been imagined and proved, and falsified and condemned! The corruption of the Church has been a slow but sure piece of work. Yet amidst much harm there has lurked a grain or two of good. Here and there it fell into a living soul and quickened it to some purpose of martyrdom. That—set the world agape for a time. The Pagan might argue that if Christianity made a man happy while his body was being mangled by wild beasts, it ought to be able to make him (the Pagan) happy, while still in possession of his limbs! But martyrdom has had no lasting effect upon moral nature. Monasticism once safeguarded *that* by shutting out the world altogether. But even monasticism proved a dangerous tool in vicious hands."

"Still, you must acknowledge the Church's influence for good," exclaimed Godfrey. "Look back at the turbulent times of history. Look at the Middle Ages! If it had not been for monasticism, all religious feeling would have been lost. It was the only vital power left to hold things together."

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Craddock laughed. "Yes—but it held them for its own purposes. For the building of safe strongholds; for the fostering of laziness and self-indulgence; for the preaching of a morality its own brotherhood daily denied; for keeping all outside its own pale of learning as ignorant and as helpless as was possible: so fostering fear of itself and power in itself on the poor souls it ruled. Bluff Hal may have been a bad king and a bad husband, but he did England one good turn when he flung open those dens and cells of infamy to the light of day, and freed ruler and people alike from the arrogant tyranny of Rome!"

"Many thinkers and writers of modern times would not agree with you," said Godfrey coldly.

Craddock shrugged his shoulders. "Oh! we have good authority for the preference of the cleansed sow for the mire," he said. "The Scav of Sophistry has been indulging in a fair amount of wallowing since the first leader of the Tractarian Movement published his views on the *Disciplina Arcani*. It must be a comforting doctrine to hold that 'for the good of others' one may lie as one pleases; constitute oneself Pope of one's own conscience and director of another."

David turned to him suddenly. "I wonder," he said, "why you have helped me? For you don't seem to believe in God, or Christ, or any Church!"

Craddock was silent for a moment. Then he looked at the beautiful young face uplifted to his own under the soft moonlight.

"I wonder—myself," he said.

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THE second and third years of David's studious life passed tranquilly and uneventfully. He grew tall and strong in the fine air of those mountain solitudes; he studied and thought and questioned; he made new friends, and learnt of new sects, and marvelled more than ever that the One Great Truth, as it seemed to him, should have so many misinterpreters; be at once Light and Darkness, Comfort and Disorganization.

His friendship with Godfrey St. Just was as strong and close as ever. He knew of Godfrey's appeal to his people and its harsh repudiation. His mother wrote, evidently at the bidding of his stepfather, to say that, since he had wilfully cut himself adrift from them so many years before, he must now make his own way for himself. They would give him no help.

After receiving this letter Godfrey had laid his case before the Principal of the College. The latter had offered him a temporary post in the establishment as music teacher and conductor of the musical festivals which took place once a year. By this means the boy was enabled to pursue his studies. But David knew that a certain restiveness was at work within his soul. That idea of a church of his own, a parish of his own, and the duties and interests and projects connected with both, was an idea too deep-rooted for extraction. He had no taste for David's simpler methods; an out-of-door Temple not made with hands; a congregation drawn by inclination, not by duty; a service that would not pall on the ear by an everlasting routine babbled by careless lips, as little thought of as any mechanical office ever is thought of.

Godfrey, if not orthodox, was at least too much of a natural Churchman to approve altogether of nonconformity to established rules. He had studied the Early Fathers

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and the later schools of Theology. He saw no way of reaching the goal of his ambition save by the usual road. But how to march the road and attain the goal was a difficulty.

During David's last year he began to notice a curious change in his friend; a reserve, a coldness, a disinclination to discuss the subject so near the heart of both. He seldom sought David for the old familiar talks. On the other hand, he was much with a young Italian student who had lately come to the College; a fiery-tongued, undisciplined youth who alternated between monastic ideals and a gay and careless self-indulgence.

His name was Giovanni Bari; his birthplace a village near Perugia; his father a priest, his mother a contadina. Such irregularities seemed of no account to the lad. He spoke quite frankly of the human errors of the priesthood. They were common knowledge in the towns and villages of Northern and Southern Italy; as much a part of the life of Cardinals and Popes as the human necessity for food, or drink, or rest. This boy intended to be a priest himself. He was not sure yet of the order he would choose, or whether he would enter some Franciscan Monastery as a lay brother; a useful career for an idler and a lover of ease, with a glib tongue, a facile imagination, and an incorrigible faculty for lying.

David disliked this boy instinctively. True, he understood very little of what he said, as he only spoke a sort of *patois* French, and David was ignorant of Italian. But Godfrey, to whom languages presented little difficulty, had translated something of Giovanni's history and life.

David could not understand the fascination that this passionate, ill-bred young peasant seemed to possess for his friend. He resented his frequent absences, knowing that they meant companionship with a rival; a sudden interruption of the walks and talks and confidences that had been his portion so long. It seemed all the harder on himself because his last term at St. Blasius was at hand. He would soon have to choose his own mode of life and face its responsibility. Before the last vacation Dr. Von Klausthal called the boy into his private study, and had a long and serious talk with him.

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"I want you to remember" he said, "that in any difficulty or trouble facing your future you have always a friend in me. I have watched you carefully during your time here. It seems strange to have to say it, but I can point to no neglect of duty, no faults of conduct, no evasion of discipline. Such a record is almost unexampled. It is accounted for by an innate strain of spirituality that seems to hold you apart from common weakness as from common faults. But I should like to advise you that it is just that strain of spirituality which will be the stumbling-block in your future life. You must learn to look *into* things, not over them. You must allow for weakness and imperfection as the inheritance of humanity. You cannot reproduce in those imperfections the beautiful fabric of your dreams. Still, those dreams are too divine to perish. Heaven grant you a portion at least of their fulfilment. Our ideals rarely achieve realization. But if they were not higher than our human reach of them, they would cease to be ideal. You have a great mission to accomplish, at once the greatest and most difficult of any that man has coveted, or God ordained. But in essaying its fulfilment you will taste a diviner joy than mere humanity knows of; possibly a bitterer despair. Yet the joy—be it ever so brief—is worth all else in life. To have performed one great action, created one great work, given the world one great thought for which it is the happier and the better—this is to touch the ecstasy of Creation. No one but the creator comprehends that ecstasy. Its birthright holds the first Thought that made a World. In a lesser and more imperfect manner we make our world; creating our joys and sorrows, our sins and our punishments, our doom and our salvation. This is Life; forming out of chaos its own hopes and faiths; falsifying or ennobling them as seems best or proves inevitable."

David listened silently to the calm, impressive voice. Every word sank into his heart, and was destined to be remembered in after years with the bitterness of regret.

Failure—as yet—he had not reckoned with. It seemed a far-off, impalpable thing. The zeal of the enthusiast was as a consuming fire. All the world, it seemed to him, had

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but to hear and it would believe; to accept the message of Divine Love, and straightway the desert would bloom as a rose, and the dry places become as rivers of joy! He had shut his ears to the hints of impossibilities. A force was in him, and would speak through him, that should awaken and startle and heal by its message. His hot youth, his passionate faith, his crude enthusiasms—these stood for Life: the life that he had been told each self created for itself; suffered for, died for. His own soul had long breathed a diviner air than earth knew of. But he would teach earth of its existence and its gifts of ecstasy. He would pour out to it what had been poured into himself, his dreams, his prayers, his enthusiasms.

Thus equipped for the battle of life, he bade farewell to its second landmark.

Boyhood had passed, and now youth and manhood confronted each other on the borderland of Freedom. There was no one to stay his feet, no one to check by word or deed his impulse to go forward and go far. With a calm self-sufficiency he took the first forward step.

He bade farewell to the mountain solitudes, the semi-monastic, studious life. It was the supreme hour. Youth alone knows it; all the wide, white high-road lies before its eyes; all is possible to its adventuring—or its hopes.

The sea had first called the spirit of the boy; then the great solemn heights of the mountains and the whispers of the woods. Now it was the Road that led through the valley and beckoned him to essay its mysteries.

He had chosen to walk to the distant town, from whence he would have to entrain for the French frontier. Godfrey had promised to accompany him, but at the last moment had murmured of a previous promise to camp out for a week amidst the Brenner range in company with Bari and two other students. He promised to join David in England a month later, and, with a certain hurt dignity, the excuses were accepted.

"I ought not to mind. I wonder why I do?" reflected David as he walked through the massive wooden gateway and realized that he was quite alone; unfettered, unimpeded by aught but inclination. The great trees

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towered around him, the road stretched before. The noonday sun was hot, but these green shades tempered it to coolness. For a few moments the boy stood looking back at the heavy gates. An inevitable regret at inevitable change possessed him. There he had been so safe, so happy. Would the world beyond ever grant such gifts again?

A sense of profound solitude touched him with a sense of profound loneliness.

"My soul and—God!" he thought. "There seems nothing else; nothing else."

His first human friend had proved faithless. How often would that lesson be repeated in the book of Experience? With a sudden effort he pulled his cap over his eyes, seized his thick stick, and set off. Rapid motion stilled thought for a while. The music of the woods, the warm pine scents, the chequered light and shade each played their part of consolation. For half a mile or so he went swiftly on, his mind set upon reaching a quaint little village where he meant to stay the night. A turn of the road brought him to a sudden halt. Then—he gave a little gasp of joy. Loneliness and regret vanished as mists before the sun. All the green and golden loveliness around took on a magic it had not worn before.

"I thought you were never coming, David," said a voice that played on the strings of his heart as a musician on his favoured instrument.

They stood with clasped hands; the Wanderer and himself; and though the brown eyes laughed at the eager young face, there was something misty and strange in their depths.

"Did you come to meet me? Oh, how wonderful—how good! But—how did you know I should be coming along this road?"

"How? Haven't you discovered that Chance always stands my friend? I had a presentiment you would walk back to freedom, and walk out of your prison alone; as, indeed, is the best and wisest way to greet what we call liberty. After all, it is only a promise of joys to be—never a fulfilment. But—let me look at you. No infant Samuel any longer, are you, my David? Youth, proud and con-

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fidant, sits enthroned on your brow ! But the dreams are in your eyes still. How much longer are they to dwell there, I wonder ? ”

“ Oh, but it’s good to hear you talk again ! ” cried the boy. “ How I have wondered about you ! Where you were ? If we should ever meet ? Not a word or sign for three whole years ! ”

“ But I made no promise. I left you to your choice of life. Now I come to see what it has done—or left undone. I am going back with you to England. Do you know that ? ”

David’s eyes glowed. “ Ah, that is splendid news ! The best I could have heard. I’ve been wondering whether Mr. Craddock would meet me in Paris. He hinted at it in his last letter. ”

“ Then he probably will, ” said the Wanderer, who looked as dusty and travel-stained and yet as much a personality of importance as on their first meeting. “ You had better make some further acquaintance with the gay Capital, my young prophet. Would you not like to see something more of it than its churches, and its Arts ? There is another and very different life outside those Temples of Hypocrisy. You should bring your spiritual instincts to bear upon it. ”

“ Why ? ” asked David.

The only answer was a laugh ; a sudden adjustment of a well-worn knapsack ; a seizure of the staff that had fallen from his grasp in the first enthusiasm of greeting.

“ Let us proceed. I suppose Wolfberg is your destination ? There is an inn there just at the junction of forest and high-road. It is no bad resting-place for a traveller. ”

“ Any place and any road is a joy in your company ! ” exclaimed David. “ I seem only to recognize how much I have missed you when I see you and hear you again. ”

“ That flatters my egoism, ” said his companion. “ What a tall stripling you are, David ! Ruddy and fair as your Biblical namesake. Longing to combat a possible Goliath I doubt not ! And now tell me how you have liked your life at my College of Community. Is it not a veritable forcing-house of original virtue ? ”

“ Your College ? ” questioned David.

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"I was its first Founder in Idea—if not in absolute fact. Klausthal is merely my deputy commander-in-chief. I thought it a pity that so many fine enthusiasms should be going a-begging in a cold and callous world. So I set about instituting a place for their culture. It seemed to me no mean ambition to send forth at stated periods a host of young and eager missionaries, all bent on reforming and spiritualizing humanity. From North, South, East, and West of the habitable globe I gathered them—their only passport for admission a single-minded vocation such as yours, David. But you must have discovered this unity of mission for yourself?"

"Of course. It meant our whole life—there."

"Exactly. And worked well for its object. I have had few failures—as far as the College and its influence went. But when the after tests were applied——"

He shrugged his shoulders. "I suppose it's inevitable. Man will be man, however spiritually minded. There is an inherent grossness and brutality about the creature, only exceeded by the more subtle grossness and more refined cruelties of his feebler counterpart—Woman. Between the two most of my schemes have come to wreck-age. Yet so strong a thing is hope that I still believe. I still look for that one Faithful Messenger who shall play his appointed part, and play it unwaveringly—to the end."

His voice grew strangely solemn. Its deep musical tones thrilled the young, eager heart that drank in their meaning. Would he too fail? Would he too fall from his "high estate"—dragged earthwards by the evil within and the temptations without?

A sense of sadness crept over him, dimming the beauty of the noonday and the glory of the shadowy woods. Darkness, helplessness, loneliness—these swept to his mind like threats of future ill. They were bound to come. No life marched along in the sunlight of success, or glowed with the satisfaction of well-doing. To be earth-born was to be sin-bound. He had learnt that; read it; seen it. Art was tarnished with that corroding stain, and human love, and spiritual ambitions however pure.

"You look troubled, my young apostle. Why?"

"I was thinking how wonderful it was that you should

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have done such a noble work, and how hard that those you have helped——”

“Have proved but human? That is only natural. I do not complain of the humanity of spirituality. The vessel is not accountable for the quality of the wine. It merely holds it, or gives it forth. But I complain of the hypocrisy that pretends spirituality is untainted by humanity; that has set up an office which allows of neither criticism nor reprimand; that works untold ill in secret, and murders more souls than it saves!”

“The office of the Church?” asked David.

“The office of those who have stripped the Church of all true meaning.”

“And yet you have founded this College for priests and teachers!” exclaimed David.

“No; for individual religious training, which, if it turns out priests and teachers, shall at least turn them out on rational principles: teach them first the pure beauties of Nature, the simple austerities of life, instead of lading out the scum and viciousness of a University town.”

“But”—hesitated the boy, “you yourself say this is only preliminary? The real struggle, the real battle, is to begin when those gates close, as they closed on me to-day?”

“That is true. I asked you if the preparation was worthy of the pupil?”

“It was splendid! We all agreed to that. I never saw a discontented face, or heard a dissatisfied expression. I think the secret was that sense of perfect freedom, and yet of wise restraint. We were not left to imagine forbidden joys; they were explained to us. Our reading, our teaching, our life were all in beautiful harmony—at once simple and satisfying. Body and mind seemed to work together, and——”

“And God saw that it was good,” quoted the Wanderer softly.

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DAVID'S next experience was one of delicious idle days. Of roaming through woods and highways; sleeping in quaint inns; rising in cool dawns to taste the joys of morning and revel in the miracle of its birth; penetrating into mysteries of green glades for noontide rest; tracking Nature's footpaths through aisles of forest, and listening and wondering through it all to the never-ceasing charm of his companion's talk.

He read romance into everything; found chronicles of history in stone and wood, and mountain height and forest glade. He filled the hours with delight; his tongue seemed a magician that worked magic for the listener's ears, and certainly never was listener more easily pleased than David. As they neared the Austrian capital he made no secret of his regrets. From Wien to Paris meant prosaic trains; heat and dust and noise; no loitering by stream; no dreaming in delicious shadow of deep woods; no resting or moving where and as one pleased to the fancy of the golden moments. But the date of Craddock's arrival in Paris was already over-strained, and David knew that he was expected.

The Wanderer drove him to the hotel where he had previously stayed, and then left him to "retire to his garret and adopt civilized raiment," as he put it. He promised to return later, and join David's guardian and himself at dinner in the Place de la Madeleine, at one of the quieter restaurants.

Craddock looked in astonishment at the tall stripling who had sprung into young manhood since their last meeting.

"How altered you are!" he exclaimed. "And how well you look!"

"I am well," said David, "and I suppose you do find

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me altered. It's two years since I saw you. I hope I've not put you to inconvenience by being so long on my journey?"

"I knew how it would be," said the Squire. "I received an explanation which must serve as excuse. One does not expect kings to condescend to ordinary mortals."

David laughed. "Was it like that?" he said. "I can quite believe it. His will is command and excuse in one. It was very kind of you to trouble about meeting me," he went on. "But I could have made my way here quite well. I have learnt French and German in the best way—by hearing them constantly spoken, and being forced to speak them in return."

"You have made good use of your time," said Craddock, with a quick, critical glance. "But we'll defer explanations for the present. Your luggage has arrived and is in your room. I should recommend a bath and a change before we go out to dinner. By the way, our friend is to call for us here, is he not?"

"He said he would dine with us at Durant's, near the Madeleine," said David.

"That's well. Eight o'clock, I suppose? Your number is seventy-seven. Ask for the key at the bureau."

David left the room, wondering somewhat at the coolness of his reception. He could not know how the change in him had startled his ex-guardian, and still held him wondering. There was a composure, an ease about the boy quite distinct from the *gaucherie* or the self-assurance that usually characterizes his age. And he was so extraordinarily good-looking! The fair tints of boyhood had deepened to a warm, healthy colour. His hair had darkened from gold to bronze—a curly, sun-flecked mass that tumbled in loose waves about his head. He was as tall as Craddock himself; wiry, well knit, muscular.

"*Tout à fait jeune homme*," muttered the Squire as he watched him depart. "Only his eyes are unchanged. The soul of the Dreamer is in them still. Will Paris waken him, I wonder?"

Paris was living its favourite out-of-doors existence. Cafés and restaurants were crowded; the lighted avenues

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were thronged with sauntering, appraising, curious men, and inviting women; an endless crowd searching and disdaining each other; setting the stamp of a grotesque and hideous meaning upon commonplace interests of life; asking of pleasure what sated senses had half exhausted.

Seated at one of the open windows of the restaurant, David looked out and down upon the ever-restless, chattering crowds. Craddock was opposite; the third member of the party had not yet arrived. The Squire watched the young thoughtful face with excusable curiosity. Did the boy understand more of what such scenes meant than on the occasion of his last visit? There was no translating that serene calm into more than just—interest: interest in something new and vivid and grotesque. For it always struck Craddock that the street life of Paris was grotesque; a parade of indecency; a lurid advertisement of suggestion; a ridiculous endeavour to please the senses at any cost, at any sacrifice.

At present the city was given up to *bourgeois* enjoyment and to curious tourists. Hordes of Americans eager to know if French vice had anything to teach that New York or Chicago could not outrival; impassive middle-class Englishmen, chary of the language, but convinced that wickedness at once diabolical and amazing lurked beneath the brilliant surface of Boulevard life; women extravagantly dressed, exquisitely painted: costly toys that any man might buy; soulless, sexless weeds cast upon this shifting sea, content with what the day or the hour might bring forth: for whom such a word as morality had possessed no meaning from childhood upwards.

Later on, when dinner was over, the Squire suggested an adjournment to the Champs Elysées. They strolled along to one of the *cafés-chantants* that are the delight of the Parisian soul. This was a new experience for David, one that astonished him too utterly for expression. These half-nude figures, the vulgar songs, the impudent gestures, the wild, frenzied dances, were absolutely incomprehensible as—pleasure. They did not even amuse. The veiled suggestiveness of words disgusted him; the tawdry figures,

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with their paint and powder and false jewellery, were absolutely repellant. Neither curiosity nor interest awoke at such invitation: only a sense of disgust more akin to the fastidiousness of maidenhood than the dawning recklessness of youth.

The Wanderer looked at Craddock and smiled somewhat cynically. "Parsifal wasn't in it with our Galahad," he said. "You will have to find more subtle temptations than these, my good St. Lucifer."

An angry flush rose to Craddock's face. "Do you suppose that it is to tempt him we are here? Didn't the Spartans make their slaves drunk so that their sons should be disgusted with the effects of wine? What else am I doing?"

"Oh! I am sure your motives are unimpeachable. To know the world, the flesh, and the—other person, is just as necessary as to avoid their acquaintance once you do know them. Well, I'm going to drink absinthe and moralize. What about you?"

They were seated at one of the numerous tables scattered about as hints of expected *consommations*. The Squire ordered iced minerals for David and himself, and the absinthe his companion desired.

He watched him as he dropped the water through a perforated spoon until the green liquid became opalescent; watched him as he sipped it with the enjoyment of the connoisseur.

"What an extraordinary being you are!" he exclaimed. "You seem to combine the primitive tastes of Arcadia with the artificial enjoyment of civilized life. How do you do it?"

David turned quickly. He, too, was marvelling at the difference between the wild Bohemian of the woods and highways, and this conventionally attired though always picturesque person, who had enjoyed a five-course dinner and smoked endless cigarettes, and now was sipping the insidious poison of the Boulevards as if it were a celestial liquor.

"How do I do it?" The strange anomaly threw back his head and laughed softly. "Contrasts," he said, "are the salt of life, as some one has wisely observed. I know

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how to use that savour for the better flavouring of my daily food. There—you have my secret.”

“You mean that monotony is death to all enjoyment?”

“Exactly. And variety *is* enjoyment. Change and differentiation of every duty, obligation, and interest in life is the only way to make life an interest and a pleasure. No two skins are alike; no two aspects of Nature; no two loves or attractions. I have modelled my existence upon Nature’s changes as upon Nature’s truths. Life is for me a kaleidoscope of endless variety, its patterns for ever varying. Were I not aristocrat at heart I should not enjoy vagabondage. Were I vagabond only——”

“You certainly are not *that*,” interrupted Craddock hastily.

“*Merci*, monsieur! But, with all due respect, I am—that. It is the life I love best: the only true life for the philosopher, unless he is a crabbed Scots philosopher like our beloved Carlyle. Why did he ever essay matrimony? No poet, or artist, or philosopher should ever marry. It is the resource of fools. You, my friend, agree with me, I know, seeing that your Cornish Paradise is perfected by no modern Eve.”

Craddock frowned. “I hate women,” he said roughly.

“The choicest flowers in life’s garden! Why do you hate them?”

“Why do you?”

The Wanderer shrugged his shoulders and drained his glass of absinthe slowly to its end.

“I hate nothing and no one,” he then said. “Hate is a very strong passion, my good Squire, though it implies an inner weakness of mind. You ought not to hate any man who has wronged you, because he is bound to suffer for that wrong sooner or later. You ought not to hate any woman for betraying you, or for not coming up to your ideals of her imperfections, because she is too much the slave of her emotions to help herself. If you once elevated your soul one quarter of an inch above the hurrying, mischievous crowd of the commonplace ants of the ant-heap, you would only regard the spectacle as amusing. Let the philosopher laugh; let the Creator pity!”

“It is easier to talk than to act.”

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"My dear Craddock, what a trite and unoriginal remark ! That is the fault of iced mineral water. Take an absinthe or a '*fine champagne*,' and your wits will respond to the atmosphere around, as mine do. With regard to David—we need not mind. Galahad only beheld the Grail, even at tourney and tournament. There is a good deal of both around us, I know, but to the pure in heart all is pure. I am going to have another absinthe. What about you ?"

"Oh, as you please !" exclaimed Craddock recklessly. "If I hold no higher place than that of an example in what to avoid, at least it is an easy part to play."

The drinks were ordered, rather to David's surprise. He leant back in his chair and watched the sauntering figures. Scents of patchouli and powder filled the warm night air. Dainty skirts whisked by, held by daintily gloved hands that seemed to recognize the art of elevation as one of suggestion. There was an endless murmur of voices, an endless chorus of mirthless laughter. The lamplight fell on costly toilettes, on scented billows of chiffon and lace ; on the set smile of lips to whom smiling was a trade ; on eyes flashing provocation, or impudently appraising the worth of a glance. The boy wondered what it all meant. Here and there a face, commonplace in comparison with works of art, stood out of a crowd of others, as full of wonder as his own. But they were few and far between. It was the hour of Paris the Courtesan ; homelier types of womanhood held aloof.

Suddenly David was conscious of a voice in his ear—a sudden perfume floating on the air. He looked up. "*Pardon, monsieur ; ma dentelle—c'est entortillée par votre chaise !*"

Something soft and white and gossamery was entangled about his feet. Someone stooped forward, laughing and tugging at refractory skirts. David sprang up and moved his chair. The dress was rescued ; he murmured apology. The lady in question had paused for a few moments at the next table to speak to two Frenchmen who were sitting there. Her eyes had rested on the rapt, beautiful boy-face that looked so out of keeping with such a scene as this. Subterfuge having succeeded, she went on talking. Crad-

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dock and his companion looked on. The one with annoyance, the other with amusement.

The vivacious French voice rattled on: "*Vous êtes Anglaise ; on comprend cela.* I know your countree. I have been there—once—twice. *Mais* I like it not so well as my Paris. This—the first time you come to Paris? Yes? And what you think—eh? Is it not beautiful; gay; *adorable*?"

"I am only just arrived," said David in careful French.

"That so? Then you have much to learn. Here—I come and sit beside you; and *messieurs*—your friends——"

She wheeled swiftly round, then caught sight of the Wanderer's face under the soft slouched hat he wore.

"*Mon Dieu! Sacré mille tonnerres!* But what do you here?" she cried. "I see you last—it is two years, is it not? The Château Rouge at Montmartre? *Et ma foi*, but what a night! And you made us a discourse *philosophique*. Recall it then—so amusing and so *sérieux*! How we laughed and wept! For me it was an *extase*; a wonder! You remember me—eh?"

The slouched hat was doffed with elaborate formality.

"Since you say we are acquainted, I must only deplore my bad memory. Doubtless I was at the ball you mention. I am well acquainted with Montmartre and its various pleasure haunts."

"Ah, you speak with a too excellent formality, *mon ami*! Not thus was it at the Château. But—*n'importe*! You invite me, do you not? I will take a *bock*. It makes so hot, and the air is so full of dust!"

She dropped into a chair and began to fan herself with a big paper fan that hung from a ribbon at her waist. There was nothing for it but to make the best of this self-invited intruder. David seated himself again. He was amused and interested by the unceremonious methods of the woman. She was very pretty in a piquant, vivacious way; she owed a good deal to her dress and her *coiffure*, and a certain restless manner of turning and looking and speaking. Her dark hair was elaborately arranged. Her hat was of the latest *mode*. Her dress, all airiness and laciness, bore the stamp of a good *magasin*. Once settled into place with the strange trio, she kept up a running fire

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of questions and remarks. Craddock's French was too rusty to permit him much enjoyment of the slang or the witticisms with which her rapid chatter was seasoned. Besides, it amused him more to smoke and to watch David's wondering face. The boy could not keep pace with the rapid interrogations and comments that fell like rattling hailstones on his ears. His French was still somewhat laboured, and in need of dictionaries and vocabularies at critical moments. Perhaps that was as well.

The Wanderer, however, appeared to enjoy this *rencontre*. His friend, who re-introduced herself as Mdle. Julie Blanche, otherwise Poucette, of the Folies Bergères made herself quite at home. She kept recalling that eventful night of the *Bal Bacchanalian*, painting the scene for his two friends with all the art and aid of eyes and hands and quaint phraseology.

David seemed to see it all: the crowded room; the choking, dusty atmosphere; the wild, dishevelled figures; and then this one man springing suddenly up in the gallery and addressing them all in his whimsical fashion, holding the whole mad Bohemian crowd of dancers and drinkers still and silent while the torrent of his arresting speech flowed on.

"Figure to yourself, then, that for one whole week I become quite good—quite pious. I go to Mass, but not to Confession. I drink but the orangeade. I make no appointments. I live even as a recluse. I say to myself: 'It is a matter of pride to be a woman; to have the influence and the power of a woman. And when I dance my dances of a night I am sedate and *convenable*. But yes—for seven long days and nights I live on those words, and by their light I guide myself. And then—suddenly it departs itself—the whim, the resolution! I meet the young Vicomte de Laon. Ah, he is *si bon garçon*! *Bel et brave comme le jeune monsieur près de moi*.' (She glanced coquettishly at David.) "I take also to myself the task of conversion. I begin *tout à fait une nouvelle méthode*. I give you my word, it is true! We philosophize; we walk in the woods; we adore Nature; we drink the orangeade and the *eau minérale*; we speak of life so great and so important; and then——"

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She broke off abruptly. Her wicked eyes were dancing with amusement. She looked from one face to the other.

"*Continuez, mon enfant,*" said the Wanderer, draining his second absinthe with due solemnity.

"*Nom de diable!* Then it happens as always. One night he say to me: '*Ah! comme je t'adore!* Let us not play at saints any longer.' A lover cannot make life less perfect. Without love no life is perfected."

"I understand," said the philosopher gravely. "My good seed fell on stony ground, and the birds of pleasure gobbled it up."

"What would you?" asked Mdlle. Poucette, with another shrug. "Had you been at hand I should have sought your counsel. You might have helped me. But—I see you no more, though many times I go to the Château Rouge and promenade the Boulevard des Italiens. But no, you are vanished—gone. I haf to console myself with *le petit Vicomte*. He is rich and generous. And philosophy—*hein!* It is but a thing of shabby clothes and scant food, and the trees and the sky——"

"And the approval of your conscience."

"Ah! I think I have not one. I am only sometimes a little tired; a little—fastidious."

Her glance lingered again on David's boyish face; met the virginal radiance of his eyes.

"Who is he? What does he *dans cette galère*, eh?" she asked the Wanderer in a fierce whisper.

"He has come from the study of philosophy to the study of life; from Nature to—Paris. An odd contrast, is it not?"

"Yes," said David, breaking a long silence. "But both are part of life, and therefore part of one's education."

"And you like Paris?" cried the woman quickly.

"Ah—you must! You so young, so fresh, to whom all is new and beautiful and exciting! *Ah! la jeunesse, la jeunesse si adorable!* So swift to go, and never—never—never to be again!"

"There are better things," said the Wanderer.

"For a woman—no! Nothing better; nothing half so good. It is the spring of life, and life has only one spring!" She pushed aside her glass and her chair. "*Tenez donc!*

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What *bêtise* I commit. To talk so—here ! I cannot think what is come to me ! Monsieur le Philosophe, I bid you adieu ! It was strange to meet you thus again. Perhaps we shall not make such a *rencontre* ever more. But—one good turn for another. I give you my word I mean it. Take that boy out of Paris. If I see him again——”

She sprang up, holding her flimsy draperies together, looking with envious eyes at the spiritual beauty of David's grave young face.

“If you were two years older I should only say ‘*au voir*,’” she said. “But the high-road is long and we are marching different ways. I am sorry I met you, for you have made me think, and I did not want to do that *en route* to Maxim's. Well, *adieu, mes amis* ! I have to thank you for talking myself into one very bad humour.”

She laughed and waved an airy farewell, and took herself off to another table, and another companion, who seemed to have been awaiting her.

“I wonder if that is the Vicomte de Laon ?” said David suddenly.

“Possibly. Are you envious ?” asked Craddock.

“Why should I be ?”

“You might desire a little more of Mdlle. Poucette's company. It was a novelty, to say the least of it.”

“I felt very sorry for her,” said David.

“May one ask why ?” inquired the Squire ironically.

“With all that charm, intelligence, vivacity—there was discontent. She was not happy. She was trying to stifle her soul.”

“You read her very correctly, my young saint,” said the Wanderer. “She has her glimpses of good, her spurts of spirituality, but they do not last. Alas ! can one wonder ? In such an atmosphere, such surroundings, and she but a bit of civilized savagery !”

“But she remembered you,” said the boy.

“For how long—a week ? Seven little days sandwiched between a love dalliance and a new method of whetting an appetite already satiated. You see how hard it is to sow the seeds of Wisdom. You can scatter them as plentifully as you please, but not one in a million will take root.”

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"I should like to have seen you amongst those people—to have heard what you said."

"*Nom de Dieu!* But it was a mad idea. And how it amazed them!"

"What sort of place is the Château Rouge?" asked Craddock. "I'm afraid I'm horribly ignorant of Paris, save just the neighbourhood of the Grands Boulevards and, of course, the usual parks and public buildings."

"The Château Rouge," said the Wanderer, "holds its court at Montmartre. It constitutes the head-quarters of a local world of pleasure. There you behold the true *fille de joie* in all her glory and *abandon*; taking no thought for the morrow, but thoroughly enjoying the to-day, or rather to-night, of her attractions. Our friend Poucette is not *vrai Montmartroise*. She must have drifted there by accident on the memorable occasion of my lecture, and—*pas pour le bon motif*. They give gala balls at the Château. It is an occasion for fancy dress and extravagant whimsies. Would you like to see one?"

David leant forward with sudden eagerness. "Oh, I should!" he exclaimed. "May we go? Will you take me?"

Craddock glanced at the flushed, excited young face. Was the poison working already?

Then he looked at their strange companion. Something—was it a shadow of pain or regret?—had stolen the usual whimsical brightness from his eyes, and left them dark and troubled.

"Will you take us?" echoed Craddock softly.

The Wanderer looked at him. "If I refused, you would find the place for yourself. I had hoped you had lost the taste for mud baths."

"They are necessary for man as well as for—puppies," laughed Craddock. "Experiments must be proved to be successful. Come, aren't you tired of sitting here? Let us walk homewards and discuss plans for the week."

VI

FOR three days David was shown only the lighter side of Paris; that of the river steamboats, the cafés, the Bois, and the Boulevards. On the evening of the third day their cicerone announced he would take them to one of the better class dancing halls at Montmartre—the Bal Tabarin.

The evening was sultry, the air stifling, when about eight o'clock they sauntered up to the "Européen" in the Boulevard des Italiens, where they were to dine. Their companion was thoroughly at home in this quarter of the city. He gave details of the history of St. Denis and the Faubourg of Montmartre; a terrible history of anarchy and revolution, of barricade and bloodshed. He painted such scenes with a force of realism that made David ask if he had been an eye-witness.

"More than that," he answered. "I was one of the revolutionaries."

Craddock started. "In seventy-one?" he asked. "You must have been a mere boy?"

"How old do you take me for now?"

"Certainly not more than forty—if that."

"Add ten—twenty—thirty years to it and yet you would be wide of the mark."

Craddock laughed. "That is drawing on one's credulity with a vengeance. One cannot quite credit you as Rip van Winkle, or the Wandering Jew, though I grant you are the most perplexing individual I have ever come across."

The remark was left unanswered. A curious change had come over the expression of the listener. "That I should perplex *you*—a sophist, a philosopher, a student of abstruse questions! It is a compliment for which I thank you. But here comes our dinner. I have taken upon myself to

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order a special one for the occasion. I am well known here, and the *chef* takes a personal interest in my welfare. An experience such as this of our neophyte demands careful preparation. More ills have been wrought in human dynasties by an ill-digested meal than by the loss of fortune ! ”

The meal was at once so delicate and so simple that Craddock found himself enjoying it with more zest than usually attended the ceremony.

The wine was new to him—a cool, golden fluid delicious in flavour, iced to a nicety. As usual, David refused it. Neither argument nor persuasion were of any avail to alter his Rechabite habits. The warm summer air stole in through the open windows. The street without seemed unusually quiet.

They lingered long over their coffee, the two men smoking and David, as usual, talking little, but listening with the interest of inexperience. It was nearly eleven o'clock before they sauntered up the Rue Pigalle, grateful for the cool breeze that swept down from the high *Butte* to cleanse the vitiated air of the streets and passages and intricate alleys of the *Quartier*.

“ I would rather be going up there,” said the Wanderer, pointing to the heights above. “ To *Mons Martyrum*, of holy St. Denis fame. A sorry way Paris commemorates their martyrdom here—where the name of ‘ saint ’ and Deity is but a jest, and all the soul’s life is extinguished by the stifling fumes of lust.”

“ Possibly those same fumes burnt on the same altars in holy St. Denis’s time,” said Craddock. “ Old French chroniclers would lead us to believe it. Why do you waste laments over the world’s wickedness, my friend ? Has it not always been with us since there was a world to be wicked in ? ”

They paused before a brilliantly lighted entrance, and then went into a large galleried room thronged with men and women. Most of them were dancing or promenading. A bar was at one end, and tables for refreshment were placed round the sides of the room. A band was playing a loud, swinging waltz, and it looked odd to see men in hats and morning coats dancing with women in fancy

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dress. The heat was fearful, and the noise of tongues almost deafening.

With some difficulty Craddock secured a table, and they sat down and watched the strange scene with varied feelings. To David it represented an ugly and senseless confusion. He had seen no promiscuous dancing of this sort apart from the platform of an open-air theatre. There was no distinctive class marked out as in the crowds near the *cafés-chantants*, or on the Boulevards. The women were mostly shop-girls, typists, or theatre employées out of work. The *cocotte* was not indicated by remarkable toilette or remarkable effrontery, as were her sisterhood of the other quarter. That she was there every one "in the know" knew; but the atmosphere was less commercial than amusing. People were there for amusement, and spoke and acted with natural freedom that had nothing to do with consciousness of immorality.

The noise of the music and the stamping feet made conversation almost impossible. Not that David wanted to talk. He wanted to understand what lay underneath this sort of life; what pleasure these people could find in it. He studied their faces with interest. He was beginning to understand the French type of face. It was usually either bourgeois and stupid, or sensual and vicious. It is rare to see a clean, healthy, honest-looking soul, even from the country or the fields. Then the women. How many of them there were, and how like a flock of chattering, inquisitive, noisy rooks they seemed! The type of beauty was too soulless, too frivolous to attract him. Pretty enough, gay enough, amusing enough they were; but he wondered if they had ever realized anything in life apart from its lighter side.

Suddenly he remembered what he had come here for. He wanted to see the place where his friend had delivered that extraordinary sermon; the sort of people who had heard it; the sort of women who had listened and laughed and wept, as Julie Blanche had done; who might also have remembered and been influenced by his words for one week.

The waltz ended at last. The hot, dusty crowd surged up to the bar and ordered drinks of all descriptions; some

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very simple and innocuous—lemonade, orangeade, *sirop*, beer. One or two girls came up to the English trio and chaffed and laughed, and demanded toll in the shape of a *boire* or a supper. Craddock left the parleying to the Wanderer, who explained that his friends could speak no French; that one was a Bishop in disguise, the other a young priest preparing to take Orders.

"Then why are they here?" demanded a black-browed, flashing-eyed Pierrette who had seated herself on a corner of the table and thrown an arm round David for support.

"Mademoiselle," came the grave reply, "don't you know that the devil demands a place in the scheme of existence? As he has to be reckoned with, he must be known. We came to make his acquaintance for a brief while, here—in Paris."

David understood what was said, and instinctively drew away from the embracing arm. It affected him strangely—that unfamiliar touch; that scent of musk and rose; that saucy, impudent face so near his own.

"Ah!" said the girl quickly. "So you are prude, what one calls—*fouille-au-pot*. You should be with *maman*, *n'est ce pas?* Still, you are *joli garçon*—I like you. Can you not my language speak a little?"

"Better not," said Craddock. But David paid no heed.

"Yes, I can speak it—a little; and understand a good deal," he said.

"Ah, *mon ami*! come and dance with me," exclaimed a gay voice behind him.

He saw their acquaintance of the Champs Elysées. She nodded gaily to his friends, and laid her hand on David's arm.

"I can't dance," said the boy.

"Can't dance? *Vous ne pouvez pas? Impossible!* I do not believe you. Every one can dance. You know music—surely, yes?"

"That's a very different thing," said David calmly.

"Oh, but you are fonny—you Engleesh! Not to *danse*—why, it is not to live! Not to know the greatest delight of any. Me—I *danse* when I am tiny *bébé*, and ever since. Have you not seen me *there*—but just now? I am the

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best waltzer here. It is an honour that I ask any one to *danse* with me. And you say—no, you cannot !”

David nodded. “And it looks very foolish,” he added, “all of you whirling and turning round, and getting giddy and hot. I can’t see any pleasure in it.”

“No pleasure ! You—you see—no—pleasure ? *Mon Dieu !* What a strange boy. I nevere see one so strange ! It is absurd that you should say such things, and say them *here !* It is not Notre Dame or St. Sulpice, *vous savez ?* Will you take me to supper then, since you will not *danse ?* I and my friend there ? Elise Bullant is her name. You take us somewhere, eh ? I—I am Poucette ; the other name matters not. It is not every one I ask. It is a great honour. For I like not *les Anglais*. *Ils sont si brusque—si stupide*. *Pas convenable, vous savez !*”

The Wanderer interposed. “We have but just dined, mademoiselle, and just arrived here. Give us an hour to watch this novel entertainment and admire your own performance. Then we shall be happy to escort you and your friend wherever you please.”

“Her friend asks not *you !*” said the other girl impudently. “Is this your son—this young prude who knows not how to valse, and cannot answer for himself ?”

“No. I wish he was ! But he is under my protection temporarily, and I am afraid you cannot have the pleasure of his company without the penalty of mine—and the Bishop’s,” he added suddenly.

“Bishop !” The girl jumped off the table and snapped contemptuous fingers. “Bishop indeed ! You only mock me—all of you ! Well, I care not. I will not go to supper. Poucette—she pleases herself. I do not find you amusing.”

“And I—not either,” agreed Poucette. “So stiff, so *stupide* they are !”

Elise whirled herself off into the crowd ; but Mdle. Poucette lingered a moment. “Look you,” she whispered to David, “one does not behave so to a pretty girl—here in Paris. I think you are carve out of stone, you Engleesh. But I am offended. I forgive not. Recall it to yourself—when I have my revenge !”

Then she, too, whirled away, and was lost amidst the masks and streamers and fantastic figures in the room.

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"Little cat!" said the Wanderer, laughing. "I hope she won't show her claws, though. She and her friends could make it very unpleasant for us."

Craddock looked uneasy. "For my part I have had enough," he said. "The Elysées was better. At least, one was in the open air. This place is stifling. Have you had enough of it, David?"

"Quite," said the boy, rising from the table. "It is not amusing here—as Poucette said."

The Wanderer glanced round. It would not have surprised him to see a deputation of indignant *Montmartroises* coming down the room to demand satisfaction for an insult to one of their number.

He caught sight of Poucette and her friend talking eagerly to some men, and had no doubt who was the subject of discussion.

Suddenly the band struck up a wild gallopade. Instantly there was a thunder of feet, a whirl of skirts, stamping cries, a mad excitement. He was caught in the whirl and carried hither and thither. He lost sight of Craddock and David. For some moments he could not extricate himself. A woman caught his arm and forced him into step. Breathless and panting, he kept up the unfamiliar motion. When he at last escaped he had been swept to the other end of the room. It was some time before he could work his way to the door again. When he got out at last he found Craddock waiting on the pavement. He was alone.

"Where's David?" he asked as the breathless figure emerged.

"David! Isn't he with you?" exclaimed the Wanderer.

"No; we got separated by the crowd. I imagined you were behind us and would have kept an eye on him."

"Do you mean to say he didn't come out?"

"I told you he didn't come out. I've been waiting here the last ten minutes expecting you both."

"We must go back and look for him, then. It won't do to leave him in there very long. Or—stay. You wait out here in case I miss him. One or other of us is sure to find him."

He entered the room again. The dance was over and

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the crowd was sauntering and chattering, and fanning itself and laughing ecstatically over the childish antics that it had lately played. The Wanderer passed from group to group, scanning the figures with anxious eyes. He could not see David anywhere. Twice he made the tour in vain, then sought the gallery. The boy was nowhere to be found.

He leant over the balustrade and searched faces and figures with strange uneasiness. True, this was not one of the wickedest of Parisian haunts. Still, there was a dangerous element—as, indeed, there is in all grades and phases of French life. If some unscrupulous courtesan had got hold of the boy? If Poucette, angry at her rebuff, had put some of her male friends on his track with a view to subtle revenge? Women of her class were capable of anything. Conscious of a growing uneasiness, he again went out. Craddock was still waiting; still alone.

The two men became seriously uneasy. They had given the boy no directions as to locality. He had no money, as Craddock always paid for everything. How would he find his way back to the hotel?

In any case it meant hours of wandering amongst the licensed dangers of the Paris streets.

"He must be in there—somewhere!" exclaimed Craddock. "If he had come out he'd have had the sense to wait. Let us have another look round."

They turned in again. The crowd seemed to have increased. They were dancing still, more excitedly and noisily and boisterously as the night grew later, and the easy familiarities of the place more assured. It was vain to penetrate through the dense, packed masses in forlorn hope of finding one special needle in the haystack. Craddock sighed impatiently as he looked around. "We could not see him, even if he were here. What are we to do?"

"There are two courses open," answered the Wanderer. "One is to follow the example of that excellent nursery rhyme and 'leave him alone, till he *does* come home, bringing his tale (?) behind him'; the other to wait on here until the crowd begins to thin. That will give us a better chance of discovery. Also—there is something else to be

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reckoned with. He may have given us the slip, intentionally. Even saints have erred at one period or another of their—seemingly—blameless lives.”

“Do you really think——”

“My dear Squire, you were young once like myself. Cast your eyes back over the primrose path and trace your own straying footsteps. Why should you imagine our protégé is going to be entirely different from ourselves? You have chosen to try a dangerous experiment. You must not be surprised at unexpected consequences!”

Craddock was silent. His strange, heavy-lidded eyes looked out at the seething mass of humanity before him, behaving in the frenzied, irrational manner of emancipated lunatics. He wondered if, indeed, the long-ignored instincts of the boy had broken loose, and he had thrown himself into the vortex of momentary excitement, with the first mad desire of youth to *know* what has only been as a theory—unexperienced; dimly imagined. If such were the case he was chiefly to blame. It had amused him to try his young saint in the fire of temptation. Now he was angry and injured that saintship had not stood the test.

“But he had no money,” he suddenly exclaimed. “These women would have nothing to say to any one who could not pay for their favours.”

“Don’t be too sure. There are attractions that appeal to feminine minds even more subtly than wealth. Innocence is one, and beauty is another. David possesses both.”

Again Craddock was silent. They were standing in a corner of the long room, scanning every group. He began to vivisect the emotions of this vast crowd, all pursuing the same idea. Nothing else was of such value, or such interest.

Here were brains turbulent with imagined joys and unrealized passions—maladies of the senses so curious and subtle that no earthly physician could diagnose their cause.

Here were strange coloured lives, and strange evanescent crazes. And at one point all the delight became discord; all the promised fruit as dust and ashes to the sated lips.

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Yet what use to warn ? Every life was bent on seeing, tasting, handling its own experience. He himself had once declared man could not pay too high a price for any sensation.

Half an hour drifted by. Sometimes they were addressed by mocking voices ; sometimes scoffed at as "*très-bêtes*," "*sacrés Anglais*," or like flattering recognition of their nationality. Craddock grew weary and impatient. "Let us go home," he said. "He may be there."

"Home ? Oh—the hotel, you mean. Very well. But you had better make up your mind for an all night sitting. Our young profligate won't be in too great a hurry to return to the husks of propriety. Philosophies melt easily before the problems of life. By the way, I have not observed Mademoiselle Poucette—have you ?"

They took the first passing cab and drove to the hotel. David was not there.

They went to the smoking-room and waited, beguiling the time with theories and explanations. Soul and body, body and soul ; sooner or later they were bound to have it out between themselves. The senses might sleep, but all who sleep waken at last. The body might despise degradation, but fleshly impulse and psychical weakness must at some moment decide the issue in the House of Sin.

Experiments had been tried often and failed often : not a grade of life or seminary of sanctity but knew that. Men had deceived others, and tried to deceive themselves, but each knew in his secret heart how and where he had failed. Consciousness of strong motive and weak nature was at once a joy and a humiliation ; and experience was only a name man gave to his mistakes.

Wearied, and with much misgiving, Craddock at last went to bed, and the wondering philosopher took himself home to his garret in Montmartre—so he said ; in reality to a certain police official whom he knew, and from whom Paris had few secrets. To him he confided the episode of Poucette and learnt where she lived.

She had not a good reputation, according to Monsieur Valérin ; she was a wild, fierce Bohemienne of the ardent Southern type and Southern savagery : a creature who

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would kiss and stab, and betray, and lie when and how the fancy took her. The Wanderer felt uneasy. If David had fallen into her clutches, it might be no easy matter to get him out of them. Besides, she was a very dangerous "first experience"—even of a mistake.

However, there was nothing to be done but wait for his return.

They waited three days, and there came no sign or word of David.

VII

THE spring was breaking into a riot of blossom and leafage under the blue of the Cornish sky. The long waves rolled in lazily; there was content in their lulling song. The earth was renewing its beauty and its youth, and the sea sang to it of hours as lovely, and youth as fair. Remote days of winter storm and wild turmoil were forgotten. Who, looking out at that magical shimmer of azure and gold, could believe that such a sky was ever black and thunderous; that such a dimpled, laughing sea could swell into towering billows, and rack and wreck all that came in its way?

A girl sat on the cliff edge and looked out at the sea; at the drifting sails on the horizon line, and the wheeling flocks of restless gulls.

She had a serious and gentle face. Her uncovered hair shone warm and brown in the sunlight; her eyes were grave and darkly blue as the sea itself. She had a book lying open on her lap. It was small and shabby, and bore traces of much reading. At the present moment her thoughts were occupied by other matters. And yet an echo of what she had read was in her mind, turning and twisting through the various channels of the brain, murmuring softly:

"Beware lest thou strive too earnestly after some desire which thou hast conceived, without taking counsel of Me; lest it repent thee afterwards. . . ."

The sentence was one of many marked and read and treasured in the ever memorable *De Imitatione* of Thomas à Kempis.

She was so absorbed in her dreams of all that those words might mean, that she did not hear a quick, light step on the soft turf, and when a figure suddenly threw itself down beside her, she started so violently that the book slipped from her lap.

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"Did I startle you? I'm sorry," said a voice. "I called to you, but you didn't seem to hear."

He stooped and picked up the little shabby volume. "How faithful you are to our good St. Thomas, Ruth. And yet I believe you thought he savoured of Popery when I first introduced him to you."

The warm, sudden colour that had flushed the girl's face began to ebb back through its natural channel. The bloom of youth and the breath of the sea were in her sun-tanned cheek and the humid softness of her eyes.

"I did not think you would be here to-day, David," she said. "Where do you preach to-morrow?"

"Only five miles off, so I put up at Trebarwick. I was going to see gran'father Pascoe when I caught sight of your brown head above the rock there. How is it you are idling your precious time away?"

"Tisn't often I dew that," said the girl.

"Naw, my dear life, it 'tisn't," he mimicked, with an inflection of her accent.

"Don't make fun of me, David. I do my best. But it's hard to talk as you want me when I see so little of you."

"Wist ye not I must be about my Father's business?"

"Ah—an' that's true, David. Ye does too much of that business I'm sometimes thinking. You'm so pale and thin and spare-like, and think so little of theeself," she added with another lapse.

He laughed. "Nonsense, child! I'm as well and strong as any one here of my age and size. The open-air life, the constant change from place to place, are very good tonics. Besides, the endless interest and importance of it all!"

"Thee'st been four years at it, David."

"I know. Yet they only seem like so many months. Oh, Ruth, it's wonderful to get one's will, and see one's dreams come true!"

"But you're wonderful yourself, David."

"No—no; don't say that. I'm only a messenger repeating his message. It's *that* that's wonderful: the same, yet never the same; an endless skein shot with beautiful colours that runs through all life; lovely, fragile, and yet so strong. A man may lean his whole soul's weight upon it, and trust it to draw him to Eternal Peace."

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"Thee'rt a born preacher, David. It's wonderful, as I said. Words are easy enough to speak, but not surely such words as yours. Like livin' fire sometimes; and then others—as gentle and sweet as the dew o' thine own nanie."

"I wish it was my own name; I wish I knew. But there, it's no use complaining. I never shall know; the sea holds *that* secret; the sea that holds so many and holds them so safe."

"You haven't found the miss o' nat'ral parents, David? No one has had tenderer love, nor better friends."

"I know—I know. God forbid I should be ungrateful! Only sometimes a natural longing breaks out to know who I really am. Well, let that pass. I didn't come here to bother about it to-day—our last day for a long time, Ruth. After to-morrow I go straight to London, to stay with this Mr. Ormistoun."

"That be another wonder: that a great, clever, learned man should hear thee by chance, and ask 'ee to come up and preach in a real church for him!"

"And I'm not a real minister. They don't reckon with our Nonconformist methods, you know. However, I've as much right to tack 'Reverend' to my name as Mr. Stephen Ormistoun has. I believe he holds most unorthodox views."

"That's what puzzles me with church folk. One says one thing and one another. An' then they fight and wrangle over 'em. Can't they take our blessed Lord's Word and just do what He told 'em?"

"Ah, *there* you hit the nail on the head—the Tragedy of Sects! The little petty differences that yet have woven this gigantic fabric of Dissension. It is the most puzzling and extraordinary thing to go back, right back to our Lord's time. Read His life, study His directions, and then see what His Church has become!"

The girl looked at the little volume she had been reading. David had given it to her two years previously, one Christmas Eve. It had not met with her grandfather's approval, he having a conviction that it was monkish in its tendency. But now and then Ruth would bring out some gem of Christian truth and astonish him by its

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authorship, until at last he had read it as carefully, if not as often, as the girl herself.

"You've studied a great deal about these differences, haven't ye, David?"

He started. His thoughts had been far away.

"Studied—indeed I have! There is nothing so easy as self-deception. But, in spite of authorities, and treatises, and controversies, I have not altered my belief that the Christ who died on the Cross was the highest type of Holiness ever granted to man. And that to follow His example by the light of one's faith in Him, is to gain peace with Heaven, even if not goodwill on earth."

"You have made a wonderful great stir with your preaching, David. They call you the Second Wesley here around."

A flush of colour rose to the young face; so boyish still, despite four years of hard work and hard thought.

"Oh, I wish they wouldn't! I'm not fit to be mentioned with him."

The girl's soft eyes turned lovingly to the speaker. She was his humblest and most adoring disciple; she had gone to his meetings; listened with amazed awe to his fiery eloquence; prayed with him; believed and accepted him as the very voice of God on earth.

For David had kept his word and followed his vocation. To and fro he had gone, preaching and missionizing; the open air his temple, and the wide sky its roof. Eloquently and untiringly he had taught the truth as he believed it. Far and wide his fame and the fame of his power had spread. Callous hearts grew soft—sinful lives grew shamed. A wave of purity and godliness flowed over dark tributaries of irreligious life. Sometimes the young preacher was followed by ardent converts; sometimes he had had strange experiences that were accounted miracles; sometimes he was enthralled by visions beautiful, and painted the Second Coming of his Divine Master as though he were a second John the Baptist. In the winter time he usually stayed at Trebarwick Hall: studying, reading, meditating for the next mission he proposed; amusing himself with the sharp contrasts of life; holding arguments with Zachariah Pascoe one day, and Morgan Craddock the next.

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The Squire's interest in him had increased rather than lessened. The boy and the youth alike possessed that charm of the inexplicable. He could not understand why David's vision of the Truth meant all the unseen, unsubstantial things that serve as sustenance for saints, and are so terribly indigestible for the common herd of humanity ; how he could *feel* and *realize* what was only a phantasm of the spiritual senses, not a tangible, provable fact. But he let the boy have his way. It cost nothing, save a roof when he chose to claim it. And for three parts of the year David did not do even that. For wherever he went his fame had preceded him, and food and shelter and lavish hospitality were at his choice, and honoured by his preference.

It was the ideal life of the faithful disciple. The life commanded for their acceptance by their beloved Master when He concluded His own earthly mission. To preach His Word ; to carry the glad tidings of Salvation wherever they went, taking no heed of gain or profit ; believing in the strength of their service as proof of their own deserts ; " the labourer being worthy of his hire," in such matters as command bodily sustenance and shelter.

So four years had passed, and now the curtain was to ring up on a change at once startling and arresting.

The young preacher had been heard by a certain Stephen Ormistoun, himself a cleric in Anglican Orders, but one who had launched forth into strange side-issues of doctrine that—while they drew enormous congregations—were too unorthodox to please those in authority. This mattered very little to Ormistoun, whose church was his own and whose audience swept in on wings of curiosity every Sunday that proclaimed him preacher.

He had been indulging in a short holiday in Cornwall when the fame of David Hermon reached his ears. He took the trouble of going to hear him. At first he could hardly believe it possible that a mere boy should draw such enormous crowds. When he saw the young preacher bare-headed under the noonday sun, a slight, tall figure in simple cassock, he felt inclined to laugh. He expected a mixture of monkish fanaticism and the illogical frenzy of the street tub-thumper. But he heard neither. It

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happened that day that David had chosen to tell of his vision on the Mount as the reason of his present mission. In glowing and poetic words he painted the scene; the gold of the sky, the sob of the rolling waters, the majestic Figure towering against that background of the Cross. People listened spellbound. Among so many credulous hearts, in a land sown with legends and superstitions, the story of that Spiritual Call was just the story to enchant them; to quicken spiritual instincts, and draw backsliders into the narrow path of duty.

Even Stephen Ormistoun listened with quickening pulse, his ears strained to catch the melody of that beautiful voice. When the service was over he made David's acquaintance. For a week he saw as much of him as was possible. Finally he invited him to try his powers on a larger and more cultured audience, and with that intention the young evangelist was taking farewell of his ostensible home and his faithful disciple Ruth Pascoe. A strong elation mingled with a certain unaccountable uneasiness. Already life had had turning points, crises for him. This was a more marked and important occurrence: a stirring up of new forces; a widening of the horizon that had hitherto limited his vision.

When he told Craddock of his intention, he was met with a stare of incredulity.

"You are going to do this for a stranger—of whom you know nothing? Why would you never do it for me?"

"I had not tried my powers. Besides, you offered to set me up in a chapel of my own. I don't want that. I should hate to be tied to one place, one form, one routine. Four walls and a pulpit are all very well for a change, but I should hate them as a continuance."

Then he had gone to seek Ruth Pascoe, and pour out his heart to her in the frankness of their long-established intimacy. He was used to using her as confidante and helper. Often had she advised in a difficulty, soothed in a moment of impatience, roused him from fits of petulant despair. But now—there was to be a break—a change. One that struck at the roots of their young lives, and whose consequences lay hidden in the mists of the future.

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Silence had fallen between them. The thoughts of both, after wandering into many channels, finally drifted to each other. David was conscious of her presence as something sweeter and nearer than any other he had known. To whom he had ever gone for sympathy; whose soul had touched his soul with the kiss of comprehension. Little Ruth, playmate and confidante of childhood—friend and confidante still.

"Dear," he said suddenly, and at the caress of the word and the voice she turned a startled face to his. "Dear Ruth, dearest little friend, how I shall miss you!"

The words were sweet as honey in her ears; she to whom this boy had always been hero and saint. Her eyes fell as they met his thoughtful gaze, and something of the strange confusion in her mind passed to him, and thrilled him with a vague uneasiness.

She said nothing: words were impossible. There is one supreme moment in life, even as there is one supreme emotion. Some wave of glorified feeling sweeps up to and over the barriers of sense, and, crushing down all that has held it back, bids the waking spirit triumph over destruction. That moment was Ruth's. She trembled, quivered, waited—then turned to him as he to her. For a moment they looked into each other's eyes: read the change, the mystery, the secret still unbreathed. Then David's face grew very pale. What had chanced? What had come between his soul and his senses? How had he passed from the cool, clear air of friendship to this troubled atmosphere? He shrank back from the girl's passionate eyes. The flame and glory of love were not for him. Only its sanctity. And yet—how sweet she was, and fair!

"Oh, Ruth, is it—does it mean that we love each other?"

"I have always loved you, David," came the simple answer. "But that is different. I never expected you would have thought for any earthly maiden. You are promised to God."

"God does not forbid human love, Ruth. He created it, as He created woman for man. And if you love me—oh, how wonderful it seems, dear! I must think of it a little. . . . Why have we only just found this out?"

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"Maybe because parting sharpens our senses, David. The sorrow, and the loss, and the loneliness——"

"Ruth, you are crying? Don't cry for me, dear. I will come back to you. We'll be all and more than the friends we've been. I hadn't thought of it till this wonderful moment; but now I see—oh, what joyful and beautiful things I see, Ruth! You and I together always: working for the same cause; loving it all the more because we—love each other? That is it, dear, is it not?"

"I think it must be, David," said the girl, "unless you change. Men do, you know; and you are going away to a new life——"

"That won't mean a new heart, Ruth."

"It must be as God wills, David."

"As God wills," he said reverently.

His eyes turned to the sea again; his beloved, beautiful sea; his sea with her changeful face, and her cool, salt breath, and her stores of song and melody. The sea whose hymn of glory had thrilled him in the summer dawns, whose messages had soothed the pulses of his unquiet heart; whose storms had held him speechless by a power no tongue could translate; whose deepest quiet held never a note of real silence.

How often it had inspired his words—poetized his speech; flowed on and into the imagery that had delighted his hearers, and touched them to a sense of kinship. He was forsaking it now for the life of towns, the murky breath of cities. Was it wise? He thought of the peaceful years of his glad evangelism; the joy it had been to speak to other souls of what his own soul held as life's most precious truth. He had been understood here. Simple folk and homely folk, the toilers of the sea, the wayfarers of the road, the shopkeepers of the country towns—they had believed in him and loved him. But what would that great world beyond care for any such message? Heed of any such messenger?

He turned to Ruth again.

"Forgive me, dear. I was thinking of the past years, and all they've meant. You seem a part of them, just as you were a part of those childish days. Do you remember?—our rows and sails; our picnics——"

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"And that strange, wonderful man!" interrupted Ruth. "What has become of him, David? He never comes here now."

A sudden shadow dimmed the youthful face. "I know. I wish he would. Oh, how I wish he would!"

"Have you never learnt his name, or who he really is?" asked Ruth.

"Never. He would never tell us. He just comes and goes in that unexplained, whimsical way of his. We know nothing of how he lives, or whether he is rich or poor, or just the Bohemian he calls himself. I was wondering if I should see him in London. It is possible. He knows it as well as he does Paris. But then—what city or place in the world does he *not* know?"

"Perhaps he has done something wrong and wants to hide himself," said Ruth.

David laughed. "You foolish child! If you knew him as I know him you would never think that. He is wonderful! And I am sure he is good. Why, do you remember that College where I was educated?"

"Yes, of course, David."

"Well, he founded it himself. He must have given up all his fortune for that one object. And when he goes about the world, as he does, he is always looking for the sort of students who fill it. Without his aid one-half of them could never have had their chance; never have had any education at all. Look at myself——"

"I think God would have helped you to your ends, anyhow, David. 'Twas meant for 'ee—this life. I can't fit ye to any other."

He suddenly bent and kissed her hand. It was rough and coarsened with hard work, but it seemed to him beautiful because of its usefulness, and because of her.

At the light touch of his lips, she blushed softly.

"Ah, David, thee'rt treating me like a lady," she said. "And I'm only a poor fisher girl, not fit mate for thee, save that I dew love thee with all my heart and soul!"

"Thank you, Ruth," he said simply. "It is a great gift you are giving me. May I be worthy of it."

"Worthy! Why, David, you're as high above me as the heavens above the sea. There's no words in my heart

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to tell thee what thou art to me. And I'm not shamed to say it, even if I seem over bold. For love is a pure and holy thing; and it has meant thee in my thoughts, and breathed thy name in my prayers ever since I know'd thee at all."

"Is that so, Ruth? And to think I never found it out till to-day!"

A faint, wistful smile touched the girl's lips. It was a naive confession for a lover. It showed how little depth earthly passion had in his nature. It might have told a more experienced maiden that there was more of friendly affection than of youth's ardent emotion in this sudden betrothal. But Ruth was only a simple fisher girl, as she had said. She had loved David all her life. That he should have asked her to share that life with him in some dim future was joy enough; wonder enough. At least, it meant "together"; no other woman taking her place by his side, winning that pure, boyish heart.

For still a space they lingered there, talking softly and disjointedly; making promise of writing each week, and meeting as soon as the new mission was fulfilled.

Then David rose. He had to return to the Hall; he was sleeping there that night.

For a few moments longer they lingered, hand clasped in hand; the sea murmuring at their feet; the wide, clear spaces of heaven and earth about them.

Then the farewell was spoken. Just for a second's space their lips touched, drawn together by some mutual impulse half fearful of itself.

"God bless and keep you, Ruth, till we meet again."

The girl's head was bent; her eyes were full of tears; her heart throbbed wildly. Then she felt herself released. She heard a quick step echoing on the rough path above. He had gone; and her tears fell down like rain.

VIII

THE evening had closed in with a chill westerly breeze. Before the fire in the big splendid library of the Hall the Squire and David were sitting. Craddock had not altered perceptibly in these four years. His life was too easy and uneventful for emotional energy, and most human weaknesses he despised. He was leaning back in his deep-cushioned chair smoking a cigar, and listening to David.

"I suppose you are right," he said as the eager young voice ceased. "Besides, I have never tried to dissuade you from any enterprise. Only you know nothing of this man—Ormistoun?"

"We are fellow-travellers on the same road."

"Sympathy and companionship do not imply honesty of purpose."

"What object could he have in placing his church at my disposal for these special services, except that of doing good and saving souls?"

The Squire suddenly leant forward. He took the cigar from between his lips, and looked full into the deep violet eyes of the young enthusiast.

"David," he said, "do you really and truly believe that you, or any priest or preacher in the world, can *save* souls? Do you realize what that cant phrase means?"

"*Cant!* It is a truth—a reality! I have proved it again and again."

"You haven't. That's an impossibility. You may have proved an emotion; a cataclysm of feeling; a sudden return to pious obligations alike of church and chapel. But to *know* if a soul is saved you must know how it meets its Maker; what account it renders to Him. No mortal can know that, for he cannot follow it through the gates of Death or learn its destiny."

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"By their fruits we know them and judge them in this life."

"I have known very fair-looking fruit come off a rotten bough. I have also known it worm-eaten at the core, despite bloom and fragrance. No, no, my dear boy; you are just as easily deceived by spiritual sinners as by material ones. Of the two I think the spiritual are the best hands at hypocrisy."

"You believe in no spiritual good or spiritual influence, Mr. Craddock. I know that only too well."

"I am ready to believe in anything you can prove to me. I have watched you grow from a visionary boy into a visionary enthusiast. You have had no check placed upon those enthusiasms. I have tried to temper them with common sense. But I have not waited till now to learn that common sense, like science, is an unknown quantity to the clerical mind."

David was silent. That little chill, disturbing feeling, never far removed from companionship with this agnostic individual, crept over his heart. What could he say? His simple arguments were worn threadbare, and had no basis of logic or subtlety such as Craddock commanded.

The Squire watched the young troubled face with inward envy. It was still the same beautiful face of the boy; serene, unlined, with clear, fearless eyes that spoke of a clean soul; the emotions and enthusiasms of youth shining through it as flame behind a crystal. The thought of that beauty and unworldliness at last facing the battle of life rendered the Squire even more cynically curious than his wont. He wished to probe the boy's soul; to get at the bottom of this semi-ascetic spirituality which dominated his every action and, seemingly, his every thought.

He returned to the charge. "You want to attract hearers in London as you have done here? To *save souls*, as you call it, in a place where the real meaning of the word 'soul' is unknown. People have pleasures, emotions, transient fits of religious curiosity, transient epidemics of charity, spasms of generous helpfulness (more or less conducive to the pauperizing of the race!). They may even be honest in their dealings with their fellow-man on a Monday morning, after being called to account by a

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spiritual Savonarola on the previous Sunday night ; but this is all they know about possessing souls—or saving them. That is where the Church of Rome has shown herself so wise. She takes the trouble off people's hands."

He replaced his cigar, and stretched his hand towards a table by his side.

"I have here a book," he said, "a psychological study of the life of a French priest. I think you ought to read it. The boy began as an enthusiast, a devotee like yourself. He was attached to a church which has had the training of saints and the manufacture of miracles. From quite a young child he was brought up in the duties of that church ; guarded by Jesuitical care from exterior influences ; taught and trained for a priesthood at once the most powerful and tyrannical the world has ever known. What was the result ? He found the grossest impurities where he had expected saintship ; learnt of its vices and corruptions ; saw in it only a system founded on *man's* ambition to play God Almighty to a cowed and submissive world ! And in order to cow them and hold them in humiliating bondage, this system, or church, or whatever you please to call it, established itself on the rotten basis of self-supremacy ; on a doctrine perpetuated for its own purpose ; proved by what in commercial circles would be called 'falsification of documents' ! This boy strangely reminded me of you, David. That is why I give you the book. You know enough French to read it in the original. Of course, the author has been banned and excommunicated and all the rest of the bogey rubbish that the Holy See uses for the terrifying of its disobedient children ! But he is man enough to despise them since he found out what they were. He cut himself adrift from their slimy tentacles, left the church, and married. I do not exactly commend the wisdom of that last action, but at least it must have been a refreshing change from the immoralities of the Vatican circles."

David took the book somewhat reluctantly.

"But I have long known the faults and perfidies of the Romish Church," he said. "I do not see why you argue from that standpoint as to the spirituality of a true Faith."

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"Because they call theirs the *true* Faith. The only true Church. The Mahomedan does the same; the Buddhist the same. Christian Scientists and Plymouth Brethren declare their faith as the only reliable one, and so on, and on, in every form of religious mania! It is more or less acute according to the constitution or surroundings of those afflicted by it."

"I have heard that madmen think themselves the only representatives of sanity. Perhaps, because you have no faith yourself, you would rather prove that all faiths are worthless?" said David.

"I have faith in what I *know*; what I have proved. Not in myths of bygone ages; old fables whose origin can be traced to mythology, and have then degenerated into the hotch-potch of sects and ceremonies that men call religion!"

"Would you call Christianity a myth? Can you honestly say that the birth and life of its Founder have not been a blessing to civilization, as well as an example?"

"We have gone over that ground before. I told you that one of the first mistakes made by chroniclers has been to prove the descent of Christ through the House of David. We get Joseph's pedigree pat with the prophecy. Then—the Church denies him paternity. So what was the use of that elaborate genealogical table? We don't hear that Mary was of that House, or Root, or Stem, as they choose to call it. If your friends of cassock and gown were only logical, they would have allowed what all rational-minded beings believe: that Christ had a natural father as well as a natural mother. The inference would not do away with His spiritual descent, or the facts of His unusual and—certainly blameless life. But, also, anything so simple *and* natural would not have suited the Church. Dogmatic Power was always a foremost necessity with that institution. It had to resort to miracles and improbabilities, and from a confused mixture of prophecies and dreams it produced a further deception—"

"Ah! please don't say any more—" broke out the horrified listener. "If you only knew how it hurts me!"

Craddock shrugged his shoulders. "You see you are unable to face clear logic because it doesn't fit in with

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superstition. Natures like yours, David, at once sensuous and mystical, hate to be brought to book for *reasons* of their faith; hate to hear of anything that might weaken it; would rather hug the chains of error to their breast than loose them and go free. You choose to believe in a mission and a purpose guiding you to do what you are really inclined by Nature to do. You are carried off your feet by enthusiasm, and then wish to carry others along with you. *Friend*, you are no more a free agent than that poor *Friend* who entered the priesthood. The vision of God and the glories of the world to come are the main factors in your life. I have watched you very closely, because you interested me; I am anxious to see if your Faith *will* be proved and stand fast; if it is going to convince me as it seems to have convinced others. Your temperament is a highly spiritual one—that I grant. The ordinary weaknesses and follies of life and manhood seem to have no attraction for you. I doubt if you ever note a woman's beauty, or realize that such a passion as love has swept men off their feet ever since the world began. We have your own sainted namesake as example. He played a rather low-down game, did he not, to the old Adamite plea of 'the woman tempted me'? Well, my young Puritan, believe me when I tell you that you have not reckoned with life or its fullest meaning till you have tested your strength against a woman's tempting. When I first read in the gospels the account of Satan's efforts in that line I could not help smiling. Hunger was a poor thing, and principedoms and kingdoms of small account to One who despised them so utterly that he came to destroy them. But why didn't the astute Tempter offer woman as a lure? Why in all the (thirty) years of that extraordinary career do we never hear a word of her influence over His life? Women followed him; women ministered to him. Did a woman ever love him, or he her? If not, he never lived man's *real* life. Therefore he was not perfect man. You may argue about his spirituality and divinity as you please. I say that tradition insists upon a perfect type of humanity—one knowing and sharing its weaknesses, and who certainly gave proof of anger and intolerance and disrespect. Yet this same tradition has

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omitted the very *raison d'être* of humanity. Give me a perfect spiritual Being, or an imperfect human being, and I can credit them; but not such a contradiction in terms as the historians of Christ have made of his personality. Can you overlook the fact that it was only those historians (in the shape of his disciples) who persistently addressed him as the 'Son of God'? Christ always called himself the 'Son of Man.' Spiritually he knew himself as Son of the one Divine Father. But physically—or so it seems to me—he acknowledged the natural sonship of all humanity. In fact, if such were not the case, what was the use of bringing in Joseph—with his careful record of genealogy—at all? Mary might have performed the miracle of the Immaculate Conception under perfectly *accredited* conditions. As it is, the conditions lead one to draw a very natural inference."

David's face had grown stern and set, as was not unusual during these controversies. He had refused to read Strauss, or Renan, or Colenso, or any of those disturbing volumes that lined the Squire's bookshelves, and, in a measure, Craddock had respected his prejudices. But tonight he seemed determined to exhibit them in the light of mere human weakness: the weakness that declines to argue or investigate a subject for fear of being convinced against its will; that clings to fallacy for fear of disturbance of faith.

"I know you dislike my arguments," continued Craddock. "But, believe me, a day will come when you *must* think out these matters on a new basis; the basis of modern thought aided by modern discoveries. When you will need to light your spiritual lamp with the oil of proved and provable facts, not dry-as-dust superstitions. Doubtless it shocks you that I say it. Anything that tears down the inherited belief of ages is a shock. But that cannot stay the progress of thought or of science. Accepted creeds will have to fall, or remain rooted in error."

"Christ will never fall from His high estate!" exclaimed David. "If errors have wound themselves around his history, that is the fault of faulty human minds. Argue as you will, the fact that there is a world—that we are men and in that world, means that there is also a Creator.

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His works speak for His superiority over our limited intelligence. What are we to explain the sun, the stars, the wonders of the deep, or of that intricate mechanism which is *ourselves*? God was the Beginning of all. He *is* all. If I doubted that——”

He paused. Craddock had risen. He laid his hand on the boy's arm; pressed it convulsively.

“Don't doubt it!” he exclaimed in a hoarse, shaken voice. “Keep your faith; keep your trust; keep your clean young soul. I wish to God, David, that I had kept mine!”

Too excited and perturbed for sleep, David went out into the grounds. He stood for long looking through that opening in the trees over the bay. The strong wind had roughened the sea; it was rolling in with long, sweeping billows. They broke against the base of the cliff, and foamed up to the rock-caverns below. Showers of spray were flying upwards like heralds of disturbance. Storm was at hand. The drifting clouds were hurried into denser masses, then rent asunder to show faint gleams of blue holding the clear crescent of a young moon.

David's pulses leapt to the sound of the turmoil, and the sting of the wind and spray: they were all familiar and beloved. Had not his childish years been nursed by them; his earliest fancies fostered by them; his prayers and dreams enwoven with their mystery? And it seemed to him now that his soul rushed forth on the restless tide, seeking a haven for comfort, even as it sought one in the bay below.

The great Vision of his life had come to him sensed with the awe and wonder of the sea. The restless call of its wild rebellion was the call of his own inquiet soul. For it *was* inquiet; it *was* disturbed. It tried to lull itself to the old sleep and dream the old dreams, but instead it would start and quiver and stand aside; questioning of what it had once held true as the foundations of the world; waiting for an answer that never came.

With the memory of that mocking voice of Craddock's, with the sophistry of his caustic arguments sounding ever

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above the turmoil of the waves, David turned away and began to pace to and fro the little glade.

It was long since the Squire had spoken as he spoke to-night. Usually he had contented himself with a cynical phrase, a flying sarcasm. There was a curious personal reserve about him at times, and he had devoted himself more to watching his protégé's spiritual development than combating his beliefs.

But this unexpected call to a wider mission and to the importance of a London audience had startled him. If David's preaching had attracted the notice of so subtle a reasoner and unorthodox a thinker as Stephen Ormistoun, there must be something in the boy. Craddock had never heard him preach. Nothing would have induced him to attend those open-air meetings, and "tramp services," as he called them, by which the young zealot had made his fame.

"I'll give him rope, plenty of it," he had said to himself. "But he's bound to hang himself when I pull it in, and show him how baseless all this rhodomontade is, from the standpoint of evolution and philosophical thought."

And to-night, in a sudden fit of impatience, he had drawn in the first strand and made the first knot. The effect had been an instant's regret on his own part—a fierce and troubled resentment on David's.

He was pacing to and fro in the cold spring night asking himself if there could really be one grain of truth in that cynical reasoning. He knew that Craddock had given years of study, of intense and cultured thought, to a subject that he, as enthusiast, had greeted with untrained confidence: accepting improbabilities as miracles, and miracles as manifestations of God's power; casting aside all discrepancies of evidence and testimony as not weighing a feather's weight in the balance of faith; all the crude childish ideas imbued by Zachariah Pascoe, fostered by Mr. Crouch, undisturbed by differences of opinion during his educational years. All these now arrayed themselves on one side and gave battle to a threatening foe on the other—one with whom he had never reckoned: the awakening of his own brain; the sudden vivification of an intellectual force inherited from some unknown ancestry, and ready to combat inconsistencies of untried experience.

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To and fro, to and fro the boy paced with fevered steps and inward agony. For the first touch of doubt *is* agony. Possibly that may be one reason why the kindly guardians of the Romish Church have penalized it as a sin!

He seemed to have awakened from a long sleep to find himself on a lonely rock against which the rising tide was leaping with threatening force. He turned thought and fancy back to his beloved standpoint—the Vision; the sight of that wondrous figure; the sound of that wondrous voice. It had been the last of a series he had recounted to the mocking ears of the Wanderer, that strange being whom he, in his heart, knew as the one he loved best and trusted most in the world. Since that sunset hour when he had accepted a mission and devoted himself to its service, David had received no further spiritual Call. Often he had prayed and sought for one, but in vain. On that vision on the Mount and the hazard happenings of the opening Bible, he had based the authority for his career and the selection of his name. He had spoken as the Spirit moved him to speak, astonishing himself often by the fluency of word phrases; the ease with which Divine Love and its messages were touched into human speech, or poetized by human imagery. Now he faced a veritable earthquake of emotions. Human love had stirred his senses; doubt had torn aside the veil by which his dreaming fancies were enveloped; prayer offered no solace; and the voices of the night held no response. Religious passion was for once chilled. He felt as a lost soul might feel wandering outside the gates of Paradise.

“‘Oh, ye of little faith!’” he cried in sudden agony. “Well mightest thou say that, my Lord and Saviour! Where is mine? What foothold has it in this slippery quagmire of doubt? I could not watch with Thee even one hour untouched by the treachery of my unworthy heart. Oh, pardon me! Help me! Do not forsake me, even if I seem to forsake Thee!”

But the moan of the sea and the sob of the breaking waves came to his ears only as sounds of terror, not as sounds of help.

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IX

STEPHEN ORMISTOUN sat in his own special den in his quiet and comfortable flat in Westminster. It was a fine square room with one window that overlooked the river and showed him the beauty and changefulness of many sunsets—such sunsets as the atmosphere of London supplies from out its strange, misty backgrounds and wealth of shadows. To Ormistoun this view of the Embankment, the dull, murky waters washing its undefended shores, the river craft sailing or steaming to and fro, and behind it all the warm rose tints of the sky, made up a picture of which his eyes never wearied.

He was a strange-looking man of some fifty years, a man possessed of much wealth, and of the strongest and strangest views on matters political, social, and religious, so the world said. The world that knew him superficially, as it only knows most of those who rule or influence it. For they alone possess the secret of true individuality: how to keep to themselves *that* which in reality is themselves.

The room was furnished with old and solid furniture. The bookcases, the writing-tables, the deep, comfortable chairs, the solid Chesterfield with its tapestried cover and cushions, the bronze and pewter and delf of decorations, all made a suitable and artistic setting for its studious occupant. A fire burnt in the old-fashioned grate, its wide hobs and polished brass fender making a spot of welcome brightness amongst more sombre surroundings.

Stephen Ormistoun was lying back in his favourite chair and smoking his favourite pipe. He was an inveterate smoker, and eschewed cigarettes as only fit for conventional purposes. In his own home he never touched them.

A knock at the door was followed by the appearance of a solemn-looking manservant. He brought in tea and its

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accessories, and laid them on a small square table beside his master's chair. He lit a spirit lamp and set the water hissing in a silver kettle. The tray and the set were of old Georgian silver, massive and handsome, as Ormistoun chose that his surroundings should be.

"Shall I make the tea, sir?" inquired the man.

"No; wait a few minutes longer. I am expecting Mr. Hermon every moment. Ah! there's the bell. Show him in here at once. You can take his luggage to his room. It's all ready, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir. It was ready yesterday."

"Well, go. Don't keep him waiting."

He rose and poured some of the boiling water into the teapot. It was characteristic of Stephen Ormistoun to be almost womanishly faddish over small domestic details.

With a pleasant smile he turned to welcome his visitor, conscious, as once before, of the contrast they presented—his worn face and thin, iron-grey hair and dark, sallow skin, set against that radiant youth and spirituality of David Hermon.

"My dear fellow, I'm delighted to welcome you! I was hoping you'd be here for tea: my favourite meal—I hope it's yours? Sit down; I'm just going to make it; the only way to get it worth drinking. To sit here and sip my souchong and watch the panorama of those sunset effects yonder, is a treat I rarely forgo for any social temptation."

"It seems a very pleasant occupation," said David.

He, too, looked out of the great square window, shrouded with heavy velvet curtains and holding like a frame the picture that Nature was painting without.

"You don't know London at all, I believe?" said Stephen Ormistoun.

"No, except for passing through on my way to Paris. I have stayed in Paris a week at a time. Two weeks last time I was over; but never in London."

"Well, you have a great deal to see and to learn."

"And to do—I hope," said David, watching the slender fingers as they carefully measured the tea into the pot.

"That, of course, depends on yourself."

He closed the lid and seated himself again. The soft-

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footed manservant brought in hot tea-cakes, and bread and butter, and inquired if he should light the lamp.

"Not yet, Richards. There's too fine an illumination out there."

The man withdrew, and David glanced around the room, taking in with some wonder its blend of æsthetic beauty and comfort.

"I didn't think London would be like this," he said. "I had an idea there was no such thing as a view, or space, or effects like *that*. It's very beautiful."

The rose tints had faded to dull gold and purple. Roofs and banks and leafless trees stood out in bold relief. The slender spire of the Abbey uplifted itself on one side, and the delicate Gothic beauty of the Houses of Parliament stood out on the other.

David was enchanted. Something of the spirit of the Englishman who recognizes the importance of his national government and his national religion awoke in him for the first time.

It was an emotion quite new and unexpected. The venerable Abbey appealed to him more than the famous French cathedral had done. He longed to be in it; to visit the sacred shrines of genius; to read its history afresh in its grey stones and memorials of past ages. He said something of this in broken words. Ormistoun was touched by his feeling and enthusiasm. They appealed to his own æsthetic instincts—instincts that had moved amongst the poetry and grandeur of England's past, and put forward further claims of hopefulness in her future.

They drank their tea and watched the shadows lengthen and the soft haze of twilight fade. Neither of them spoke as yet of the true reason of this visit, or touched deeper subjects than just those on the surface of thought. It was not till the tray had been removed and the curtains drawn that the strange host and stranger guest left external things to themselves, and drew up their chairs before the fire for a first plunge into religious confidences.

Ormistoun sketched briefly his reasons for that defiance of orthodox ministration which had brought him not only into notoriety, but into disrepute.

"Of course," he said, "if my church were not my own

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I should be bound to leave it. As it is, I have a congregation far exceeding those of many West End churches. They support me so lavishly and warmly that I know they would follow me wherever I choose to go. It is a bold thing to run amuck against authorized traditions, but I maintain that what the extreme Ritualists do unchecked, any other churchman has an equal right to do. There is a strong notion of reform going on in the heads and hearts of many who have no clear idea of *what* it is they want to reform. Broad Church, High Church, Low Church, and Indifferentism all argue for greater liberty of thought and action. Amongst them stand out a few original thinkers, who dare to oppose past authorities and refuse to be trammelled by obsolete rules; men who, like myself, will not preach what they do not believe, and yet may not preach what they do."

"But—do not you preach as you believe?" asked David in some perplexity.

"Not quite; and not yet. The time is not ripe."

"I cannot understand a division between thought and action," said the young enthusiast.

"Possibly so. You possess the elementary frankness of the beginner. I will warrant there is very little of the theologian's cavilling in your discourses; nothing of the policy of 'Omissions' or the subtlety of 'Commissions' which form the text of most spiritual practices of the present day."

"You know what I am. Purely and simply a preacher of what I believe, and what I want others to accept."

"You do—believe, I suppose?"

David started. The blood rushed to his temples. Was he to be exposed again to casuistry and contradictions?

"Of course I believe," he said. "I could not preach if I once doubted."

"Exactly. That is the spirit of the true evangelist: the preacher with a purpose; the missionizer with a mission. That is what we want here in this great whirlpool of doubt and lost faiths and incredible vileness. That—was why I tried to secure your help. It seems to me that the Church has crowded out all individuality in her ministers, even as she has lost touch with true spiritual

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instincts. Conventionality has been the death of spirituality. We have an enormous amount of mental slovenliness in our modern 'Unholy Orders'; stupid and obdurate minds; rampant sacerdotalism. Belief in God has degenerated into acceptance of man's explanation of Divinity, an explanation that to my mind is as incongruous a thing as that pictured figure of the Creator in the Pope's chapel—the figure of a bearded septuagenarian supported by clouds and hurling thunderbolts! Man has always been hampered by the limitation of his conceptions. He has from the days of his savagery endeavoured to give visible form to what he felt was superior and more powerful than himself. He has failed signally. We must *ascend* to spiritual comprehension. It will never descend to us."

"I am afraid," said David, "that you will think me extraordinarily ignorant on all matters of theology. It has been my fate to feel so deeply a conviction of God, and of God's service to the world in the personality of His Divine Son, that I have asked for no further proof than what the Bible gives."

"That, I suppose, has been your sole text-book?"

"It contains all one needs; so it seems to me."

"I should like to hear exactly, if you care to give me your confidence, what induced you to take up this mission?" said Ormistoun.

"My history is very simple."

And, briefly, David told it. How he was found by the fisherman, David Perryn, and adopted by him and his wife; his passion for the sea; his odd, unchildish dreams, the visions that had seemed to him so real; then his meeting with that strange friend whose interest in him had been the turning-point of his life; the intervention of Morgan Craddock; the change in his social condition; his four years at the College; and then his return to Cornwall, there to begin this "tramp" preaching.

Ormistoun listened with great attention, never once interrupting the frank recital.

"Then—you really have no idea who you are?" he said at last.

"Not the least," answered David. "It has troubled me very little, though. Earthly relationships are not a

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necessity; there are more discords in families than in friendships."

Ormistoun smiled. "That's very true. Still, the human family has to hold together by some social bond. One cannot always be enough for oneself, even if one feels that that self is the only thing that matters in the world at large. To be without any curiosity as to the source of your being, or who is physically responsible for your appearance in this troublous world, argues a very unusual self-sufficiency on your part, Mr. Hermon."

"I cannot help it. Human facts and necessities have always seemed to me of such small importance beside the *real* things."

"What exactly do you mean by the—real things?" asked Stephen Ormistoun.

David looked at the worn, ascetic face of his questioner.

"I mean—what has come to my soul as spiritual truth. The living one's best; the doing one's best for others; thinking one's highest; keeping to the faith pointed out to us by Christ, preached by His disciples, practised by His saints: the one and only true Faith that leads to Life Everlasting."

Ormistoun said nothing for a moment. He refilled his big German pipe, and lit it, and drew long, deep breaths of it before he answered that impassioned declaration.

Then he said: "The *one* and only true Faith? Have you ever thought that the world holds millions of human beings all arguing that one point? Hundreds of Religions founded on it? Millions of martyrs dying for it? The *one* true Faith, my dear boy, is just the Faith of each devotee; each head of that section of the church which the constitution of the country or the ecclesiastical power of a powerful priesthood chooses to maintain. Every group or body of these millions is drawn together by the particular sophistry that welds such Faith into arbitrary confession. To the enthusiast it comes easier than to the materialist. To cowards religion is a refuge; to the worldly-minded a pastime; to self-made martyrs a torment; to the thinker a vast tract of unprovable fallacies, through which the tentacles of thought stray and claw and catch at every sort of proof, generally to

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find that nothing can be proved; and *that*—for one good and sufficient reason. Wisdom is not to be justified of her children in this imperfect world."

David looked troubled. Had he come here only to face another species of Morgan Craddock; only to be disturbed and unsettled by subtle arguments he was unable to fight with any weapon of logic?

"I cannot argue with you, Mr. Ormistoun," he said. "I imagined from what you told me in Cornwall that you were a minister of the Gospel, and therefore accepted its tenets. If you have a church and preach in it, what is it you *do* preach?"

"You will hear me to-morrow," said Ormistoun, rising and proceeding to shake out the ashes of his pipe before he laid it aside. "And now I'll call a truce to discussion. I am going to take you out to dine. By the way, do you descend to the bondage of conventional evening dress or not?"

"Not—for the sufficient reason I don't possess a dress-suit. That is one of the things I am commissioned to get myself. Mr. Craddock thought you might advise me on the subject."

Ormistoun laughed. "I'm no stickler for conventionalities myself. Still, I do not take refuge in orthodox clerical garb while outwardly opposing most of its conditions. I only asked because our choice of a restaurant depends on our regard of costume. A tail-coat and a white shirt are the only passports to civilized life after seven o'clock in the evening. But we will dispense with them, and possibly enjoy ourselves the more for doing so. I know a delightful little French restaurant—what made you start like that?"

David's face grew suddenly white. "Nothing—I mean—I don't care for French places. Couldn't we go somewhere English?"

"That question shows a lamentable ignorance of London life," said Ormistoun. "Nothing in our hotels or restaurants is really English. We are run by Swiss and Italian managers; catered for by colonial or American meat purveyors; cooked for by French or German *chefs*! I could not conscientiously take you to a really English

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restaurant. Stay, though—there's Simpson's in the Strand. They play up to insular prejudices. The stolid joint, the rich soup, the boiled fish, and that everlasting detestable English compound—the melted butter! Shall we go there?"

"Oh, please pardon my want of manners! I should not have interfered with any of your arrangements. It was just a stupid prejudice on my part about French——" He hesitated.

"Well, the best way to fight a prejudice is not to give in to it. So we'll even go to Leicester Square, and try to believe we're not a hundred miles from the Boulevards."

Again that look of annoyance, or disturbance, shadowed David's face. Ormistoun, whom nothing escaped, noticed it.

"So," he thought to himself, "the record is not so spotless as it looks. What was it, I wonder, or when? And is Paris responsible?"

They walked up Whitehall in the chill spring evening, Ormistoun pointing out to his companion all the interesting and remarkable landmarks of Time, or of memorialization.

David's quick enthusiasm and unflagging interest amused him. It was long since he had encountered a mind so fresh and unspoilt and so singularly boyish. Apart from that one subject of his ministry David was, indeed, a mere boy; easily pleased, quickly interested; full of unspent energies and eager for knowledge. Charing Cross, St. Martin's Church, the great Hospital, the National Gallery, the memorable Square where Landseer's lions crouched under the flickering street lamps, the line of theatres, with cabs and carriages depositing their freights of delightful millinery and bored-looking men—all these were subjects of interest to the young observer. To Stephen Ormistoun they only represented a phase of London's evening life known and witnessed *ad nauseam*. Still, the fresh ignorance of this young mind was a delightful novelty. To see commonplace things in the light of an untried experience makes up one of the privileges of maturity.

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They reached the Restaurant Pigalle and sauntered in. The crowded tables, the hurrying waiters, the smell of food all brought vividly back to David those weeks of his Parisian experiences. Only the faces here were different. Ormistoun seemed well known. A smiling attendant conducted him to a table in a quiet corner commanding a view of the room, though itself apart from it. Rose-shaded candles threw a warm light on shining glass and cutlery and damask. David was nothing of a gourmand, and cared little what he ate or where he ate it. Still, there was a pleasurable sense of novelty about cafés and restaurants that appealed to him. He had enjoyed his brief experience of them in Paris; he was expecting to enjoy them in another and more matured form in this new world of London.

Having resolved to avoid the bugbear of theological controversy, Ormistoun proved himself an amusing and delightful host. He told David interesting things of people he would meet and places where he would go. The object of the mission was lightly touched upon. So much would depend on whether the young preacher would "draw." If he did, a wider field might open to his choice. Stephen Ormistoun had engaged him for a series of six services on six Sunday evenings. The choice of subject was to be David's own. Many of Ormistoun's congregation were personal friends: men and women of high social position; representatives of art and literature; stars of the theatrical world, men of letters, teachers and professors from the big schools and colleges of London. He wondered whether David would feel nervous at addressing an audience so widely different from any he had known. Yet, when he remembered the effect his preaching had had upon himself, he felt that there was a new and unknown power to be reckoned with. The pure and spiritual magnetism of the boy. For boy, indeed, he looked; younger even than his twenty-one years, and with a face whose extraordinary beauty and spirituality possessed an irresistible fascination.

"I wonder what Lady Pamela will think of you?" he said suddenly.

David looked surprised. "Who is she?" he asked.

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"She is a very lovely and very surprising lady, and one of the shining lights of my congregation. That is to say, she holds a number of sittings and has made all her friends take others, and trumpets my fame and my originality rather more loudly than I care about. When I published the notices of the mission services she was furious. It appears that most of her Sunday coverings are devoted to Bridge; and her conscience, or rather what she pretends to believe is her conscience, is fighting with her social obligations. I don't know which will win. But I do know that she is intensely curious about you, and is determined to hear you at least once. So I rather fancy she will be at St. Ninian's to-morrow evening."

David did not seem specially interested. The social world, the smart world, the world of wealth and influence, were an unknown quantity in his mind as yet.

He had just refused an *entrée*, and was wondering why a dinner must consist of such a number of needless dishes, when one alone was enough to satisfy either appetite or digestion. His abstinence and temperance astonished Ormistoun, though he had always considered himself as a fastidious eater rather than a gourmand.

"You never touch wine? Is it a principle or a fad?"

"Simply I don't want anything better than water. It quenches my thirst, and, after all, that is the only reason why one drinks, isn't it?"

Stephen Ormistoun laughed. "Indeed, no. Most men drink because they like it, or the stimulating effects of it. It has nothing to do with thirst. Real thirst is only excited by alcohol, never quenched by it."

David's eyes were wandering to and fro, scanning the faces, watching the stream of arriving and departing couples. Here again, as in Paris, it was the same procession—two and two, the man and the woman. Did the same secret underlie the companionship? Was this social surface only a surface, after all?

A very pretty girl somewhat *démodée* in style was passing his table. She was followed by a dark, Jewish-looking man. The girl gave David a glance that meant what most of his age and sex would have had it mean. But the wondering gravity of his eyes gave no response. Indeed,

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he was far away in memories of another scene, another face—a mocking voice, saying, "Come and dance with me!"

Suddenly he started to his feet, uttered an astonished cry. Without a word of apology or explanation he dashed down the room, and Ormistoun saw him holding the hands of a lark, foreign-looking man; bearded, long-haired, and dressed in a loose velvet coat and wearing a slouched hat.

"Who on earth has the boy got hold of?" he said half aloud. Then he went on with his dinner. He put the stranger down as some foreign actor or artist; possibly some out-at-elbow tramp acquaintance made in Paris.

After some five minutes David returned, flushed and eager. "Oh! may I bring him to our table?" he exclaimed. "He would like to know you."

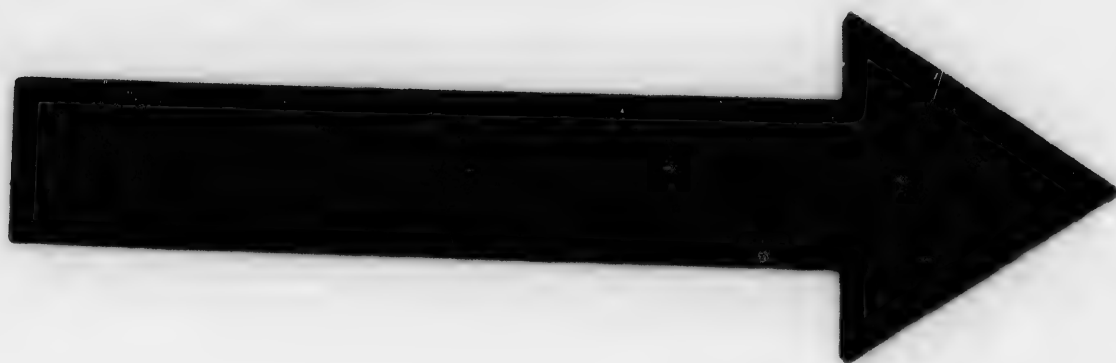
"He? Who?" asked Ormistoun rather coldly. He was a man of reserved nature and fastidious tastes; he did not care for promiscuous acquaintances.

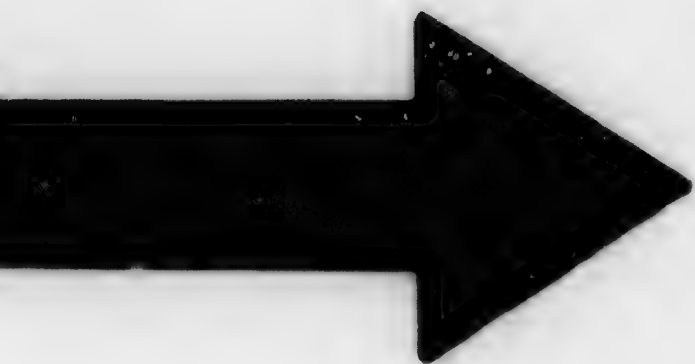
"My friend. The man I told you about! The cleverest and most wonderful man I have ever met. It is four years since I have seen him. Would you mind if he joined us?"

"Has he no name?" inquired Ormistoun, glancing at the strange personality in the distance.

"None that I have ever heard. He calls himself 'the Wanderer'—that is all."

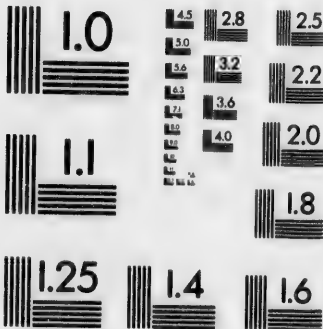
Ormistoun laughed. "What an odd idea! However, since he was your first benefactor, as you say, by all means let me make his acquaintance. He looks a vagabond, but an artistic one. I hope he is not going to prove a mere *farceur*."





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IT was with quite an abnormal curiosity that Stephen Ormistoun regarded the stranger. The introduction by David was informal. It never occurred to him that his old friend and his new were on a different social footing, and might prove antagonistic instead of convenable.

"Enchanted, monsieur." There was a low, half-mocking bow, a quick, searching glance, and then the Wanderer was seated between them, and Ormistoun was begging him to take up the *menu* where he pleased.

"Thank you—but I have dined," was the answer. "A glass of wine I'll share with pleasure, and for the joy of meeting my young friend here once again. But no more."

"Mr. Hermon tells me you were influential in deciding his career for him?" observed Ormistoun as he filled the newcomer's glass with Barsac.

"Mr. —?" The Wanderer glanced up, then looked at David. "Oh, a thousand pardons! I forgot you had a surname. You have found it has a use at last?"

Stephen Ormistoun looked puzzled. David explained.

"Then Hermon is not your name at all?"

"It is as much his name as any individual can claim. The accident of birth places us in a certain set of circumstances, and we formulate our ideas on that accident: claim rights and privileges, and dower ourselves with importance. After all, what does a name convey? Not the person himself, but something by which he may be singled out from a host of other persons. I was responsible for David's outer signification, or rather his spiritual chart directed its choice—eh, David?"

"It matters very little to me," said the boy, shrugging his shoulders. "Since I shall never know who I really am, I am as content with one name as another."

"I understand you have not met for some years?" observed Ormistoun.

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"That is so. But report carries strange messages on occasion. I came to London to hear him preach to-morrow. I had not intended you should know, David. It was an odd chance that drove me here to-night; as much from the association of the name, too, as anything else."

Again that shadow of trouble, or annoyance, crept over David's face. Ormistoun grew curious.

"The restaurant bears the name of a Paris street," he said casually; "one in Montmartre, I believe?"

"That is so," observed the Wanderer. "You know Paris well, I suppose?"

"As well as casual visits allow of one knowing any place."

"You mentioned Montmartre. It is not a locality where one sees gentlemen of your persuasion very often."

"Possibly," said Ormistoun coolly. "But is there any hard-and-fixed rule as to the localities 'gentlemen of my persuasion' may frequent—even in Paris?"

"Certainly not, if you choose to throw conventions overboard. If report speaks true, you have done something of that sort?"

"Since you know so much you must know pretty well all. My name stands for many things, including liberal showers of abuse."

"That proves you've lifted it out of the ruck of contributory conditions. I applaud your courage."

"But tell me—*do*," interrupted David eagerly, "are you staying in London now? Shall I be able to see you? Did you really come to hear me?"

"I really did. And that I am staying in London is proved by that fact. With regard to seeing me——"

He looked at Ormistoun, then glanced at his own somewhat Bohemian costume.

"I am *plus roi que roi*—more of a vagabond than ever. I hardly think it would do for you to be much in my company. What do you say, my reverend sir?"

The mocking glance and mocking voice annoyed Stephen Ormistoun. He was not used to being addressed in such a fashion.

"I have no control over Mr. Hermon's actions," he said curtly. "He is at liberty to do what he pleases."

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"I don't fancy he will abuse his liberty. Will you, David?"

"I hope not. I am keenly interested in London. I want to see as much of it and learn as much of it as possible. But——"

"It is to the full as dangerous as its gay sister over the water," said the Wanderer. "Some people think even worse. The veneer of hypocrisy is thicker, but the rottenness beneath is as foul!"

"That is very sweeping condemnation," said Stephen Ormistoun. "In all great cities there is a certain amount of vice and sin, as there is an inseparable amount of poverty and distress. It is part and parcel of the great social fabric. How to alter it is the problem that generation after generation propounds and never answers."

"The Riddle of the Universe applied to humanity in the aggregate; the finding out the essential quality of sin and then doctoring it with Homœopathic doses of feeble legislature. Fortunately for the world many men are better than their actions—even politicians."

Stephen Ormistoun grew interested. Socialism was to him a conception of the highest good for humanity in general; the organization of a common interest in common, that is to say, universal things. But also it was a subject so confused and so bound up with individual interests that it seemed as yet a Utopian scheme. Was this wild-eyed, bearded stranger one of the movers in the great synthesis of human purpose? one who recognized the waste and misery of human life as curable, despite the disorder that civilization had achieved?

He forgot prejudice, he forgot æsthetic antipathies; he burst into an eager confession of opinions, of views impersonal and collective: ideas for the social grouping of mankind into a wider and more useful body; self-governing, self-controlling, and self-elevating. He told of individual effort and individual failure; he was altogether a different person from that cold and critical Stephen Ormistoun of first introduction; and as he unbent to opinions and exploited his views, so in like manner did that other mind open out and give back kindred opinions and exploit other views. David listened eagerly to the flint-and-spark

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controversy. It was altogether novel to him. He heard wild theories discussed and innumerable authorities quoted. There would be a quick passage of arms—a sharpening of weapons on wits; but through it all ran a mutual comprehension that went far to break down exterior prickles of caste.

The discussion grew and widened into other channels. Ormistoun, at last conscious of the lateness of the hour, asked for his bill, and invited his new friend to come back to the flat and continue the discussion over coffee and pipes; but the invitation was refused.

"It is close upon midnight already, and David should have a good night's rest as preparation for his ordeal to-morrow. Another time, another night I shall be delighted."

So they parted at the door, and Ormistoun hailed a hansom and drove back to Westminster more excited than David imagined was possible for one so cool and critical.

"Who can he be—that man?" he asked again. "Culture and erudition, and common sense and mad enthusiasm combined, and you only know him as the Bohemian he appeared and the vagabond he calls himself! It seems incredible!"

"But as long as he is himself, what does it matter?" said David. "To me he is a man unlike all other men, and therefore there's no reason to classify him under any special name or profession. I only know I owe him everything. I might have been still a fisher lad, living only the life the other boys led, had not he helped me, inspired me, directed me into the channel that seemed the best fitted for my peculiarities."

"What does he do?" asked Ormistoun. "A man must work to live, you know; and he seems to have travelled far and wide, and met and known the most celebrated thinkers of the age. That means possessing money. Yet to look at him——"

David laughed. "He did look a bit uncivilized to-night. But he can be as much of a—well, to say gentleman seems absurd! He is that—naturally. I mean he does dress and look and behave conventionally sometimes."

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"In Paris, I suppose?"

"Yes."

The brief monosyllable closed the subject. Ormistoun said no more. When they reached the flat, David asked if he might go to bed. His host took him to his room to see that all was prepared for his comfort.

David noted the attention. "Do you know all this is much too fine and grand for me?" he said. "I'm used to the plainest and simplest sort of life."

"You are my guest," said Stephen Ormistoun, "and as such will have to put up with what is good enough for me. You will be called at eight o'clock to-morrow, or later, if you prefer?"

"Later! Why, I'm out and about by six o'clock every day of my life."

"You must do as you please about that. But town isn't country, you know, and London doesn't take down its shutters or set about its daily routine till seven or eight of the morning. On Sundays it's even later—except, of course, for Eucharistic enthusiasts. But possibly your particular form of Faith does not embrace sacraments, or dispense them?"

"No," said David, "I am not a regularly ordained minister. I do not profess the rubric of the Prayer Book, and though I have studied the Thirty-nine Articles I could never—conscientiously—subscribe to them."

"I have heard many students of Divinity say *that*," observed Ormistoun. "I said it myself, but I was forced to do violence to my own feelings at the mandate of my spiritual superiors. Now, thank God, I have broken loose from them all. Of course, I live in daily expectation of being suspended by my Bishop; but, as yet, he has seen fit to ignore my unorthodox proceedings. Well, good night. You'll hear and see for yourself to-morrow what manner of man I am!"

David stood in the centre aisle of a small and beautifully appointed church. The altar at which he gazed in surprise was massed with white flowers, draped in gorgeous embroideries, studded with silver vessels. The stained-glass windows threw warm shades of violet and crimson

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over the chequered black-and-white pavement. Tall pillars held simulated candlesticks to which electric light was supplied. A sense of gorgeous simplicity and of æsthetic taste stimulated the boy's curiosity, and fed some latent sense of æstheticism within his mind.

Harmony, beauty, subdued tones, an intense restfulness—these were the characteristics of St. Ninian's.

The church was filling rapidly. David was shown into a seat midway in the aisle. There were rows of rush-bottomed chairs, and none of these were appropriated. Some half-dozen rows of cushioned seats at the top of the church were let off to regular seat-holders. The rest of the congregation sat where they pleased, and contributed to the offertory.

A magnificent organ pealed forth the "Gloria" of Mozart's twelfth Mass. Then the choir filed in, white-robed, graduating from boyhood to manhood, followed by Stephen Ormistoun in simple surplice and cassock, the scarlet hood of his degree adding a solitary note of colour.

David held his breath in astonishment as the glorious music thrilled out upon the stillness; sweeping over bowed heads and kneeling figures; filling the whole building with melody. Then it died away into softness, blending its closing harmonies into the opening chant of the choir.

How wonderful it was! Those lovely boy-voices ringing out in very gladness of their message, the deeper tones of the *altos* and *bassos* sustaining them; then the full-blended sweep of both, soaring, spreading, melting, fading, dying into an exquisite silence that left all hearts waiting for a climax; the climax of prayer.

David knew very little of the formulated English Church Service. He did not trouble to follow this special form of it by letter; he was content to listen and observe. He was just a little anxious and a little eager to hear Stephen Ormistoun preach. The rest mattered nothing.

There was a great deal of choral singing. Then, just as the last hymn before the sermon was given out, a side door to the right opened softly and some late arrivals came in. They passed to those reserved seats at the foot of the chancel. David noted them with a little surprise. They were nearly all women, and women of a stamp he had

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never met as yet. Fine flowers of ultra-civilized society; dressed and *coiffured* and jewelled to the last note of fashionable extravagance. That they bent a knee before the altar, or expressed the faint mockery of reverence due to the occasion, seemed both a condescension and an anomaly. Their scented laces and costly furs and gorgeous millinery looked as out of place in a church, as cassock and surplice would have looked in a theatre.

Among the little crowd of fashionable beauty was one woman impossible to overlook; not because she was beautiful, but because she struck just that right note of exquisite proportion which blends colour and attire into perfect harmony. David was in view of a curiously fascinating profile. He felt himself compelled to unwilling admiration as well as unwilling criticism; he had never seen any one like her. The soft, dusky waves of carelessly perfect hair framed a face at once provoking and elusive. The eyes that looked out on the world of men and things in general were of a deep golden hazel, shaded by unusually long and curling lashes. Strange eyes, elusive and yet expectant; windows of a soul but half awakened; reflex of emotions set to the time and hour of any excitement that promised novelty.

The name of Pamela Leafie was a name known to her set, and to many reflexes and copies of that set, as a "name to conjure with." She was an attraction wherever she went; the stiffest *cordon* of proprieties had opened at her bidding, and pretended to look upon her escapades as harmless eccentricities of genius. For Lady Pamela seemed able to do endless things, and to do some of them extremely well. She wrote a little and talked a great deal, and danced divinely, and sang exquisitely; also she seemed never tired or bored, or at a loss for amusement. Possibly because she had a knack of making all things amuse her—even the most serious.

Stephen Ormistoun was one of the serious things that she had lately turned to social account. She thought him delightful, both as a personality and a preacher. And it specially amused her to listen to him in his church and then entangle him in feminine casuistries at her own luncheon-table afterwards. When that tall, impassive

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figure passed from the altar to the pulpit she was always conscious of a little thrill of excitement. No other church and no other cleric had ever given her that thrill. And she was jealous of such rare sensations in a world where even vice was cornered by loss of inventiveness, and had had to fall back upon such poor examples as those of Sodom and Gomorrah!

She rarely troubled herself to be in time for the preliminary service. "I don't care about curtain raisers. Why should I bore myself with hymns and prayers?" she told Ormistoun. And being a privileged person, and one to whom much was forgiven because she possessed much, he accepted the excuse for what it was worth.

To-day he opened his note-book, as usual, to no formal text. His idea of a sermon was to speak to people of what materially concerned them. Of the topics of the day as they bore upon its events; the sins and follies and quips and cranks of the passing show; that show in which all mankind played its part, served its end, and took its chances.

He lifted his head and gave one long, direct gaze over the expectant crowd. He knew they were all there to hear him: drawn as the magnet draws the needle by that irresistible passion of curiosity which makes so largely for the success of an enterprise.

"The subject I have chosen to-day," he began, "is the Mystery of Evil. It is a subject that has been largely discussed and written about and theorized about. It is probably the strongest argument that Atheism employs against Deism. Partly because evil implies cruelty as well as sin, and the Christian theory of God is perfect sinlessness; partly because Omnipotence, as man translates it, implies that the will of the Creator must have been a consenting power to the creation of evil; therefore such a Creator cannot be entirely good. Another class of theologians solve the mystery by saying man was granted free will, and was capable of continuing sinless had he chosen to do so. I confess this has always seemed to me like begging the question. Because—apart from man—we have a Tempter and a Temptation presented to his sinlessness,

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and capable of overthrowing the fine balance of his destiny. So if man was without sin the Tempter was not, and we get back once more into the myth of Beginnings; the dual forces at work from the very earliest history of the world down to the present moment. Just as Day is the opposite of Night, and Shadow of Sunshine, so is Evil the shadow of Good and the—seemingly—opposing force with which it has to reckon. Prolonged or everlasting daylight would be the most tiresome thing our minds can conceive: a perpetual, blinding, dazzling, fatiguing force, destroying the beauty of earth and robbing man of his artistic senses, seeing that shadow and softness tend to illustrate the meaning of a picture. We may use as an illustration of my point that the sun does not *cast* the shadow, although it is the cause of it. Therefore, why should not Good be acquainted with Evil without *being* evil?

“There is another argument of the Atheist, viz. that sin either entered the world *against* the will of the Creator, in which case He is not all powerful, or it entered *with* His permission, in which case it is His agent, and therefore He, too, is sinful. This may be a very comforting conclusion for a mind that prefers darkness to light, but it is far from being a logical one. We might begin by saying that our translation of the word ‘Omnipotence’ is limited by our incapacity to conceive it. There are two words that stagger the human mind when it tries to grasp their actual meaning. One is Eternity; the other is Omnipotence. These expressions, as applied to man’s conception of the Almighty, have assumed most extraordinary shapes in human imagination. I maintain that omnipotence is only a force controlled by natural forces. The earth and all it contains, the heavens and all they contain, the sea and all its wonders, are but parts of one huge machine set working for some purpose of which we are entirely ignorant. Show me the man who can explain the reason *for* a world, when no living soul was there to desire it; the reason *for* man to be created at all, when ignorance of his very nature seems to represent him as a series of experiments all more or less faulty. Show me the man who can explain this, and I will confess that he is second only to the God he explains.

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sin—no evil—no cruelty—no suffering. If we had had no existence we should not now be paying a daily penalty for that existence. But we find ourselves in a world not of our own making; part of a system we shall never understand, though we search and argue and fight over fragments of elucidation all our lives. We can only fall back upon faulty records, imperfect histories, puzzling chronology, and—Religion.

"The root of religion is, of course, goodness as contrasted with wickedness. The attempt to live up to an accepted standard of perfection. Man is for ever bolstering up that standard with impossible obligations of spirituality, and for ever falsifying it by limitations of humanity. He falls back into natural sin as often as he tries to lead an unnatural life. For Good and Evil are both parts of his nature, and since he is bound to accept that nature, he cannot escape its penalties, or its weakness.

"But—for sake of argument—let me ask any of you, or let me ask myself, from whence do we get this ideal of perfect goodness? Is it from the Bible—that disputed, imperfect, and contradictory source of our spiritual knowledge? Say it is. Then who can read the chronicles of the world's creation, the world's speedy fall into sin and evil and suffering, and trace in those chronicles one Perfect example of goodness? The God of the Jews is a God of war and bloodshed; of the most arbitrary class distinctions, in spite of His being the origin and original pattern of Man. I cannot even see that He is a God of Justice. In His dealings with Pharaoh, King of Egypt, He is described as *preventing* the King doing certain actions, and then punishing him for not doing them! I could point to hundreds of instances throughout the Old Testament that prove the Jewish God to fall short of even our poor human conception of perfect goodness, perfect love, and perfect justice. He—to my thinking—proves for Himself, as well as for His chroniclers, that Good and Evil *are* dual forces, as I have already said, working in the Creation from the Beginning: working in man, working in man's professed Redeemer, and working in order to prove that evil is necessary to produce good, just as light is necessary to manifest the contrast of darkness.

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"To the primitive man there was day and there was night; there was good when things went well with him and his enemies let him alone; there was evil when his children displeased him and his enemies fought for his possessions, and famine and bloodshed and disaster proved that some Force he could not appease was punishing him for some reason he could not explain.

"Through all the pages of the world's authority for its existence, Evil marches triumphantly along. It is in the history of Creation and the history of Redemption; it is a stronger force and generally a more successful force than good. But, also, it is a proof of its own necessity; for if suffering and sin are evils, they exist for the purpose of contrast with happiness and purity; they call forth virtues that otherwise would have no place in the natural scheme of things; they are the agents of a purpose working within the world and within man's soul for a given end. What that end is we may not know. Our education is not completed here; it only begins. Sin is part of it. Suffering is part of it. Love is part of it. And none of these are altogether good or altogether evil. Sin may bring repentance, and Suffering produce virtues, and Love—that strangest and briefest and most powerful of human passions—may exalt us to the level of the angels, or drag us lower than the fiends of darkness themselves! It is the custom of Puritans and sectarians of all denominations to paint Sin as a thing accursed—a fearful moral disease. It should be painted as a human attribute and a human benefactor. It shows up our small virtues as nothing else could show them. It has created the most exquisite hypocrisies, and the most remarkable code of laws to safeguard our morals. It is always with us, and we neither hate, nor fear, nor shun it; neither do we attempt to understand it. It is taken for granted, and manifests itself in our first responsible action. It is life's mystery and life's taskmaster; but, also, it is life's Teacher.

"We are bruised and hurt and crushed by it, yet there are times when we come out conquerors. If the evil in us contains the germs of Death, the good escapes Death. And it is the good that will outlive the evil, once we become conscious that it is a better and a wiser thing. But

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the one is not possible without the other, and the distinction between the two would be less arbitrary—possibly less harmful—if we recognized that fact instead of abusing it. Man believes in good and tries to formulate good, and lo! when he seeks his ideal it is imperfect and beyond convincing demonstration. Platitudes we have, and texts that may be represented in a dozen different ways, and theories without end. But one formula, 'As it *was* in the Beginning,' has a meaning we would do well to apply to it. For what does that Beginning prove? Chaos, and out of Chaos, Evil, and out of Evil, Good, and the mystery of the one is the mystery of the other, and both are centred in the Law of Being, which means the Law of Life. From that we proceed; to that we hope to return. But our own efforts are largely necessary. We need not think that to eat, drink, and be merry constitute the whole of our social obligations. Far from it. Because things have been wrong and still are wrong is no reason to accept wrong as a standard either of thought or of action. If we believe in Good at all, we must believe in the Highest form of goodness, and that every effort at attainment stands for something in the eyes of that Great Power our souls must acknowledge—seeing that It is part of our souls."

XI

THE deep, vibrating tones of that powerful voice ceased to rise and fall on the stillness of the church.

With a sense of lessened tension on David's part, he looked around and saw that all the congregation were rising. The organ pealed out once more. The choir sang the sublime "Ave Maria" of Pergolesi, and, amidst a frou-frou of skirts, a cloud of sense, a confusion of perfume and fragrance, he found himself in the outer air.

For a few bewildered moments he stood trying to collect his senses; to force his thoughts back into the natural channels from whence they had been roughly driven. After faith so absolute, peace so perfect, he had been roused as by a trumpet-call. He had listened to what seemed to him the ravings of pure rationalism, and listened with a reluctant acknowledgment that he could not fight against such reasoning. He was far too ignorant on the one part, far too spiritual on the other. If Faith is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things *not* seen," David had more than the ordinary Christian's share of it. His feelings stood to him as convictions; he had never probed deeper for reasons of belief. Now he was thrust into a chaos of doubt. He had listened to man arraigning his Maker and proving that Maker at fault. The eternal verities were not eternal; they had a logical beginning, a logical continuation, and would or must have a logical end!

He could no longer close his eyes and walk blindly. Some one—something—had struck the rock of his faith, and straightway a stream of questioning and alarm poured forth. He, too, looked up at the Heaven above and the earth below and asked himself—What is Truth?

His feet carried him on and on. Sunday crowds were passing to and fro in orderly confusion. Church doors were

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open ; music pealed. He heard the echo of familiar hymns such as had sounded on some Cornish moor or crowded Meeting House. He was in a world of religious faith and following ; a Christian, humanized world ; a world of churches and worshippers. How was it, then, that everything was crumbling around him ? That nothing seemed *real*. Nothing stood for what it had been used to stand ; neither God, nor Christ, nor the Church, nor human souls !

Unconsciously he wandered on. He found himself amidst large and beautiful spaces ; budding trees ; spring flowers ; wide stretches of grass. He was conscious of passing figures, of whirling carriages, the noise and stir of humanity. He hurried on and found a quieter nook—a place closed in by high shrubs and banks of evergreens. Seats were scattered about under the yet leafless trees ; a broad sheet of shining water flowed at his feet. With a sigh of relief he threw himself into a chair and buried his face in his hands. He wanted to be quite alone. Just himself and that Spirit of the Unseen with whom he was used to hold commune.

Already he had recognized the fact that in all moments of supreme exaltation, as in all moments of supreme despair, the soul is solitary ; that it has to suffer alone ; to live alone ; to go through all life's deeper tragedies alone ; to die alone. And then—what next ?

As he sat there and fought with the demon of Doubt, and argued and struggled for the old simplicity of divine hopes, he woke from life's apprenticeship at last ; from boyhood to manhood ; from dreams to suffering. The heritage of humanity was his, and knew at last what it had accepted. A mission that must prove up to the hilt its divine origin and its divine truth, or else sink, confounded and dismayed, into the dust of failure.

How could he do it ? How ? How ?

He felt the hot smart of tears in his eyes ; the pangs of an unbearable agony rent his heart. He tried to cry out to that Rock of Strength, sure as the foundations of the world, and lo ! a voice whispered : "The world has no such foundation."

There had been no Garden of Eden ; no Adam, no Fall. Man was like God, and God was like man—and both were

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imperfect. Had he not himself wondered at some of those records of Genesis? Wondered that God should walk in a garden and talk with man as an equal? Should allow the great Masterpiece of Creation to be wrecked by the machinations of one of the lowest of its creatures? Wondered at the seeming cruelty of punishing a whole world yet unborn for the sin of an imperfect piece of workmanship? For if God knew all, He must have known that man, though created in His own image, was bound to do wrong, and if He knew it, why make him? Why pronounce the world and all it contained "very good," and then let it be confounded by man's first trivial error? Why should countless generations be still suffering for that error? Why should he, poor, faulty human egoist, be now in existence, crushed by misery and perplexed by doubt? Feeling that righteousness, holiness, joy, love, were words for poets to sing into beautiful sentiments; but, apart from the beauty of the sentiment, were only sounding brass and tinkling cymbals.

He sat on, his hands pressed to his burning eyes, all his brain a tumult of misery. "And I am to preach to-night! To preach *there*!" he suddenly cried.

He lifted his head, conscious of the cruelty of the thing that had sprung on him. He had been invited to undo what this other man *did* every Sunday of his life: to tell that pleasure-sated, fashionable crowd the simple truths that every word of their own priest falsified. The position seemed farcical in the extreme. He felt he could not do it.

Suddenly a hand pressed his shoulder; a quiet voice was in his ear. "David——"

The boy's face crimsoned, then grew pale as death. "Ah! if you've come here to laugh at me——"

"Nothing is further from my thoughts. I followed you because I guessed what it would be. I was there, too!"

"Then you heard——"

"I only heard what I have known more years than you can count. I only heard what half the world believes and the other half is afraid of. Have you not yourself questioned a little, doubted a little; translated the confession of Faith into an historical testimony, not an inspired one? I think you have, David, before to-day."

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The boy was silent. His tear-stained face, his passionate eyes, the quiver of his lips, spoke a tale of mental suffering.

"This was bound to come," went on the quiet voice beside him. "I have watched and waited for its hour of darkness. Do you fancy others have not known that hour, David; struggled through that darkness? It only means that the story of one life is the story of all. Doubt, Suffering, Pain—Release——"

"What release?"

"There is but one, my David, but one. Death stands at the portals of Life awaiting our entrance. He dogs our footsteps all through the weary journey, watching for his prey. It is bound to be his; it is a law that God, with all His omnipotence, cannot abolish. And, believe me, it is the most merciful law of all He has framed. Man pretends to think otherwise, because few, if any, have *known* the curse of prolonged life. Life left desolate as generation follows generation; life crying vainly, "Take me into nothingness, into Hell itself. 'Twere better than this!"

David looked at the speaker. Never had he seen passion so dark, suffering so unutterable in any human face. Least of all *this* face, usually the synonym of lightness and fantasy and good humour. He trembled, and grew suddenly afraid.

There was a faint stir in the leafless boughs above; a sudden shadow on the water. A cold tremor thrilled the boy from head to foot. He could not speak; he only sat motionless, gazing into another mystery of suffering, forgetful of his own. The darkness deepened; denser shadows swept the brightness from the sky; a chiller touch was in the cool spring air.

"Who—are you?" faltered David. "You talk of generations passing as if, as if——"

"As if I had witnessed their efforts and their failures? Perhaps I have. Life is not a thing of once and for ever. It *is* for ever. God's thought created the Universe; God's love sustains it. We are part of that universe, therefore we must be part of that love. Does that thought hold any comfort for you?"

"It holds all the comfort I am capable of assimilating. You must allow for an utter rout and confusion of pre-

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conceived ideas. They have to be readjusted, and that is not done in a moment."

"Not in many moments, or in many years; perhaps not in many lives. Come with me now, David. I will show you something of life's suffering and life's patience as yet unknown to you; something that will restore your faith in Heaven so rudely disturbed by our friend the Theologian. At present you are wrestling with you know not what. Let that pass. Lay down your weapons, my young Samuel; you do not need them—yet."

It was nearly five o'clock before David returned to Westminster. He found Stephen Ormistoun waiting for him in the study, and rather uneasy at his prolonged absence. He gave him delighted welcome.

"My dear fellow, I couldn't imagine what had become of you! I was afraid you had lost yourself. Sit down and have some tea, and tell me what you have been doing all day."

David sat down rather wearily. Something of the stress and turmoil he had undergone was visible in his face. He was utterly fagged in body and mind.

Ormistoun gave him tea and asked no more questions. He saw that something had happened; he gave a shrewd guess at its nature. Dreamers like David Hermon sometimes faced a rude awakening that found them unprepared.

David drank his tea thirstily. He had not tasted food since the morning, and Nature found out his weakness and forced him to confess it. Ormistoun chatted easily and indifferently on various subjects. Inwardly he was wondering what David had prepared for the evening service, and whether he was physically strong enough to carry it through. The young face was very white, the eyes of an unnatural brightness; the hand that held his teacup was tremulous: signs of mental disturbance these, without doubt.

At last David spoke. "I think I ought to tell you that had I known what sort of preaching your congregation expects, I would never have undertaken these services."

"Ah!" Ormistoun drew a quick breath and squared his shoulders. "So *that's* what's wrong, is it? I suspected

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as much. But, my dear fellow, don't you see that it's just *because* our views are so different that I wished you to expound yours. They have had so much of the reasonable side of Christianity that it will be a treat to hear the emotional. You need only be just yourself. Speak as if you were addressing your Cornish congregation of the slate quarries and the fishing hamlets, and you will be doing 'my' congregation, as you call it, an excellent service. I have let it drift into pleasant places and suffered its conscience to sleep. I want some one to rouse it up again. These Lenten services will do that, I am sure. I—I suppose I rather shocked your susceptibilities this morning?"

"It was not so much the shock," hesitated David. "It was that all you said was so reasonable; so like what *might* be if—if only one had not been accustomed to think differently."

"Is that the only trouble?" asked Ormistoun gently.

"Only? Surely it is enough. It means readjusting one's convictions——"

"Ah! but *were* they convictions?" interrupted Ormistoun. "Consider the subject calmly, and you will find that Religion is not a matter of *conviction* to most people. It is a term they apply to certain obligations of life, connected with a special church, or parish, or set of people with whom they wish to stand well. You know the old distich—

'At church on Sundays to attend
Will serve to keep the world your friend.'

There never was a truer saying. The Religion of the world is a purely conventional thing. Most people are more concerned about a new Hair Restorer than about the life of their souls. If they were not roused occasionally to spasmodic outbursts of piety they would forget religion existed at all."

"I have been to places to-day," said David, "where religion *was* the mainspring of life; where patience and self-sacrifice and helpful love spoke more than words of the reality of Christ's example."

"Where in the world have you been?"

"In the backwaters of this City, amongst the poor and

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the suffering ; in homes of poverty and in homes of sin. And yet something worked within them that meant good—that was, in its way, most beautiful. The patience of the aged ; the self-sacrifice of the young ; the way they shared their poor possessions, and nursed and cared for their sick and dying. It was wonderful ! You could not but read the lesson of Christ's life into it : ' If ye do it unto one of the least of these, ye do it unto Me.' ”

“ Tell them *that* to-night at St. Ninian's,” said Ormistoun. “ It may not do much good, but at least it may be less harmful than what they heard this morning.”

“ If it was harmful, why did you preach it ? ” asked David quickly.

“ Why ? Because it seems to me to be true—because it *is* true. Only men are afraid to say it in the pulpit. The modern church is bolstered up with the lies of centuries and the mistakes of cowards. That is why it has lost all influence. Even that stern tyrant the Popish See can only keep its head above water by stringent measures : by forbidding Doubt as a heinous sin, and confiscating any literature that throws an illuminating light upon its doctrines and devices.”

David thought of that book Craddock had given him—the story of the young priest. He had not had courage to read it yet.

“ I have the courage to say what I think and what I believe,” continued Ormistoun. “ It is strong meat, I grant you, for some of the babes of orthodoxy ; but the time for feeding-bottles is over. I say nothing that I have not proved to my own satisfaction, and that every one who hears me is not at liberty to prove for himself. Much of the Scriptures are contradicted by modern evidence, rendered impossible by Science. And Science is the exponent of fixed laws, not of fantasies and impossibilities. Men, both in the Church and out of it, are beginning to see that at last. Reason is the highest gift of life. If it were not intended for use we should not possess it. Unfortunately its first efforts are directed into wrong channels by a false system of education ; that ridiculous ‘ Has been—and must be ’ which plays havoc with dawning consciousness. The young have been trained up in the way they

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should—not go. Now they are beginning to depart from it. Most of the troubles of humanity arise from early misunderstandings. They find they must get their beliefs *out* of life, not fit them *to* it. The world may appear the same to every one, but it is entirely different for each individuality. You can't generalize about it, because A's experience is different from B's; and that of C declares A and B to be false and improbable."

"I cannot agree with you," said David. "I have been content to believe in what seemed the will and purpose of God, working through mankind for a given purpose. I have taken the story of Creation and Redemption, the Fall and the Atonement, as deep truths, not as Biblical fables. And the Bible itself has been my chief textbook; the chart of my salvation, as it is the chart of other souls toiling on life's weary pilgrimage."

"It is refreshing to hear *that*," said Ormistoun gently. "It will be as a cup of cool water in the dry desert of facts to those who hear you to-night. And now you will pardon me, I am sure, but I should recommend an hour's rest before you take up your duties. Of course, you will have nothing to do with the preliminary service; you merely preach after the anthem."

David rose. "I think I will take your advice and rest," he said. "Call me when it is time to go."

"One moment!" exclaimed Ormistoun as he was leaving the room. "Will you preach in the surplice, as I do, or just in the simple cassock?"

"I have never worn any distinguishing vestments," David answered. "I should prefer to be just as I always am."

"Very well," said Ormistoun. "By the way, we have no dinner here on Sunday evenings. It would be too early before service, and too late afterwards. Usually my man prepares a cold meal for me on my return. To-night, however, I have promised, on our joint behalf, to go to Lady Pamela Leafte's, in Grosvenor Street, for supper. She came to the vestry this morning and insisted upon it. I hope you won't mind? It will be a novel experience for you, but not an unpleasant one. She is one of the loveliest—and one of the most dangerous—women in London."

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"I am your guest," said David simply. "Of course, I will go wherever you wish."

The door closed on him.

For a long moment Stephen Ormistoun stood looking at it with bent brows and sombre eyes.

"What a sensation for St. Ninian's!" he muttered half aloud. "That young spiritual face with its halo of golden hair; the simple black gown. He looks like that picture of the Young Monk—the monk whose soul is waking to the facts of a recognized martyrdom; the soul that thought to find Heaven and faces—Hell."

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XII

"MAY I come in ? . . . I must come in. It's no use saying no. Oh, Mr. Hermon, I wanted to be the first to congratulate you! You don't mind ? . . . It was wonderful—wonderful! I think I cried. In fact, I'm sure I did! His Reverence never told me what we were to expect. Oh, you made me feel so wicked!—and yet so good! I don't know how to thank you! Are you very tired? You must be. You know you're coming home with me, don't you? A glass of champagne will do you all the good in the world! Where's His Reverence? I always call him that. Gracious! what a boy you look. Seventeen. Are you more than that? I don't feel as if I could call you 'Mr.' Hermon. It seems ridiculous! You have another name, I know. David, isn't it? You *look* just what I always imagined David would look. The Star of Jesse or something, wasn't he? Well, never mind. I know he fought Goliath, and I always pictured him as a sort of glorified Jack the Giant Killer. Ah! Your Reverence—how are you? I've been making friends with Mr. David. I think he's wonderful. I'm so glad I came! You'd better make him your curate."

She stopped at last. David had not said a word. He was too astonished. It was the lovely lady of the profile who had distracted his attention that morning. He had never seen any one so marvellous: her dress, her hair, her face, her gestures, her flow of airy chatter, the strange gold gleams in her hazel eyes, the subtle perfume that blended with her personality, that intangible something of exquisite femininity and exquisite worldliness—these were experiences he had never faced. He stood dumb and confused, conscious of scattered senses; of a wild desire to flee from this subtle presence; of hot indignation with her frivolous words, and yet wondering if one phrase of

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his lingered in her memory; if one word of his had really brought a tear to those dazzling eyes?

Stephen Ormistoun was speaking, a gentle rebuke in his deep tones.

"Lady Pamela, I have told you I cannot have you coming round to my vestry after service. You will be scandalizing me in the eyes of my choir boys!"

"Where are they? Dear cherubs in their little night-dresses! Mr. David, why didn't you wear a nightdress—I beg pardon, a surplice? Wouldn't one of yours fit him, Stephen? Not but what I think he was more 'in the picture' as he was. Do you know what you reminded me of? That painting of 'the Young Monk.' Goodness, Stephen! what's the matter?"

"It's so odd you should say that! I thought the very same thing. He has that same look in his eyes."

"Yes, he has. How funny we should both have thought of it. Oughtn't we to touch wood, or spill salt, or something? There's a superstition about it, or is it only sublime unconsciousness like you told us about last Sunday?"

Stephen Ormistoun smiled. "Subliminal consciousness, you mean—the seat of inspiration and intuition."

"Yes, that's it. You explain it better, but we mean the same thing. Now, are you ready? I'm going to whisk you back in my motor. Rue has just given me one. It's a beauty. Came direct from Paris—chauffeur and all. I've had to learn a lot of new French words in consequence. It's the divinest sensation. You get in and you just go; and nothing matters, even if you were to get smashed up and fly straight to Kingdom Come! I hope you're not shocked, Mr. David. You're so young that I expect you're half a saint—'Trailing clouds of glory,' as some one said. Shelley, wasn't it? It must have been, because he's the only poet I ever learnt; the others I read. But that doesn't count. . . . Stephen, are you ever coming? I've ordered the loveliest mayonnaise for you in case it was a fast day. You do fast in Lent, don't you? These Church disciplines are so good for one. I always give up sugar in my tea. Mr. David looks as if he lived on manna. Come along; I'm sure Pierrot will be tired

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of waiting. I call him Pierrot because he's so merry. It's not his name."

She was at the door: a cloud of lace, a whirlwind of loveliness; a something that sent David's wits whirling and left him only conscious that he was following a will-o'-the-wisp.

God was in His Heaven up there in that arc of crystal-line glory, but surely Heaven was nearer earth than it had yet seemed.

When David was able to collect his senses after being whirled through streets and round corners and lamp-posts, he found himself in a large, brilliant drawing-room, where a number of women and a few men were playing cards, or standing chatting in groups. Some of the women were in evening dress, some wore hats and furs as if they had just come in from the street. Lady Pamela swept into their midst much as she had swept into the vestry of St. Ninian's. David kept close to Ormistoun.

"My dear people," he heard her say, "you know I've forbidden Bridge in Lent! At least, I meant to forbid it. You ought all to have come with me to St. Ninian's. It would have done you such a lot of good!"

"Did it do you any?" asked a man with weak hair and a blond moustache, as he leant back in his chair and surveyed the "hand out" of his turn.

"Me? Rather! I wept a silent tear over my friends' many sins. Yours in particular, Teddy. I seemed to see them all so plainly—almost as clear as my own excellent qualities. I feel wings sprouting already!"

She went up to a mirror and began to unwind her motor veil. A maid came quietly in, and she tossed her furs and her long coat into her arms as unceremoniously as if she were in her bedroom.

"That'll do, Rosalie. I'll keep on my hat. It's too *chic* to part with. Oh! bless my soul, I was forgetting St. David! Aunt Thusa, where are you? Oh—there! Come and be introduced. He's the most perfect darling you can imagine!"

"My dear Pamela, I have just heard him preach."

"Oh! of course, you were there, too. But you don't know him. I'll introduce you."

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She whirled round, and seeing David still by the door made a sign to him.

A great many eyes followed that slight, boyish figure. He was very unlike any of the usual habitués of the Grosvenor Street drawing-room, even on a Sunday night, when eccentricity was in full swing, and a Christian Scientist or an exponent of *Parlour Magic* were equally possible guests.

The grave young face with its dark violet eyes made instant appeal to women's admiration; for in every woman's heart lies a sneaking fancy for the cleric. When he is young and handsome, and half a saint, that fancy touches the extreme of fanaticism.

The lady addressed as "Aunt Thusa," who in reality was the Countess of Silchester, put up her lorgnettes and examined the young man critically. He was atrociously dressed even for a clergyman, and his boots looked what they were, the product of a country bootmaker, Cornish at that! Yet the unconscious dignity of his manners left him independent of criticism. He was not even aware of it.

"This is my aunt, Lady Silchester," said his hostess. "Mr. David Jesse—oh, no, you're Hermon, aren't you? Mr. David Hermon of Jesse—the Countess of Silchester."

David bowed gravely. The Countess returned it. Then she put out her hand. "I have so recently had the pleasure of hearing you preach that I feel quite as if I knew you, Mr. Herman. Your name is German, I take it?"

Lady Pamela had swept off to the card table. Her aunt motioned David to take a vacant chair next herself.

"German?" he repeated. "Oh, no. It is a scriptural name, I believe."

"You believe? Surely you *know*? Anything so important as one's name and one's family should never be taken on faith."

David smiled. "I'm afraid I have had to take mine on faith, Lady Silchester."

"You astonish me. May I ask the reason?"

"I have not really any idea *who* I am."

The Countess put up her lorgnettes and surveyed him once more. She was a portly, handsome woman of ample means and liberal opinions, who had a mania for getting at the root of anything that promised scandal. In any one

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less well-bred and highly connected this weakness would have been called vulgar curiosity. In a Countess it passed for sincere interest in her fellow-creatures.

"No idea! How very extraordinary! Pray tell me all about yourself."

"I was picked up on the shores of a little cove in Cornwall. The man who found me was a fisherman. He and his wife adopted me, and I lived with them for some twelve years. I believe I was one year old when I was discovered. I received my education from the clergyman of the parish in the first instance. Afterwards I was sent to a College in the Austrian Tyrol, and there trained for the calling I had chosen."

"Dear me, how interesting!—how intensely interesting! But have you never tried to find out who were your parents? How you came to be saved from a wreck? I suppose there *was* a wreck?"

"I really don't know," said David.

"What a curious lack of interest in your antecedents! Well, in any case you must have been fastened to something—a spar, or raft, or whatever it is that shipwrecked people are attached to."

"I believe it was a spar," said David.

"Had it no name? Usually in maritime occurrences of this sort there is a name, or initials of a name to furnish a clue. At least, the stage always provides that. I cannot imagine real life being less ingenious."

"I never heard of any name."

"No name. Dear me, how very unfortunate! But, at least, you had some clothes on? Were they not marked? Did not your foster-mother preserve them as proof of your identity?"

David laughed softly. "Really, Countess, I cannot answer any of these inquiries to your satisfaction, because I never troubled my head about them. It mattered nothing to me who I was. I found myself alive and intelligent, and I was fortunate enough to have friends who helped me. I only wanted one thing of life; to do my Master's will, obey His call, preach His Word. If I can do that I ask no more."

"That is a very satisfactory state of mind—for a clergy-

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man," said Lady Silchester; "quite what they ought to feel. But I am afraid very few do. I was charmed with you to-night; quite charmed. Of course, you are very young and not very logical. Dear Mr. Ormistoun has set us all right upon fallacies that you crudely stated were facts. No reasonable person in the present day accepts tradition as a fact. But possibly you come of a race of enthusiasts—some dear dead, decadent poet, perhaps! Surmise is so extremely interesting. I do wish there had been a name on your linen, though. You're quite sure on that point?"

"Not at all. I never asked and I was never informed."

"Possibly your foster-mother is keeping it as a clue. Is she still alive?"

"Oh, yes. She is a lodge-keeper now on the estate of the gentleman who has been so kind to me—Squire Craddock. He paid for my College education, and his home is my home whenever I choose to make use of it."

"That is how things should be," asserted Lady Silchester, "but as they rarely are: the helping hand, the kindly advice; the 'little more and how much it is,' as dear Robert Browning says. Well, this has been most delightful. Oh, by the way, since your name isn't Herman, why do you call yourself so?"

David hesitated. He had never been put through such a personal catechism. He began to wonder if society people usually manifested this extraordinary interest in what was no concern of the social world.

"My friends suggested it," he said at last.

"Your friends? This Cornish Squire, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"I wonder why he selected a German name?" she persisted.

"It is not German. It was taken from the Bible. I opened it at hazard, and we agreed to select a name from the verse on which my finger rested."

"It gets more and more like a play, or the plot of a novel!" exclaimed the Countess. "The wreck, the spar, the adoption, the marked linen, the choice of a name! And to think it's all true; all your history—I mean all that you know of your history. I must tell Pamela.

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She'll be enchanted. Oh! and about your call. You really did feel one? So many clergymen—I beg their pardon—priests (they do so hate to be called clergymen nowadays)—so many cler—priests don't feel any call, but just accept a living because it's in the family. So wise of the dear things. Oh! there is Pamela making signs to us. I suppose she wants us to go down to supper. These Sunday suppers are quite an institution here. We are a very poor show to-night compared to what we generally have. But perhaps people remembered it is one of Reuben's evenings. He is my niece's husband, you know. She married into Finance. There he is, standing by the door."

David looked in the direction indicated. He saw a swarthy, common-looking man, short and stout, with a hooked nose and dark eyes. A sort of horror swept over him. *Her* husband! He the possessor of that radiant loveliness; that strange, perplexing, fascinating woman who had stepped into his life only to-day? He had not thought of her being married at all. But to be married to a coarse, ugly Jew—

His thoughts were arrested by the voice and touch of the very object of those thoughts.

"Mr. Saint David," said a mocking voice, "if you will condescend to partake of anything less celestial than manna, will you honour my poor supper-table? You shall take me down if you will. Oh! I wonder if I ought to introduce you to my husband? No, on second thoughts I won't. He'll be tracing you to the twelve lost tribes—were there twelve?—on account of your name. His is Reuben, you know. And I believe Leafie is only the transubstantiation of an original Levi. I don't know which is the worst. I always call him Rue—you can guess why. But *that's* too usual a state of things in modern married life to be worth a comment. How pale you are! You're not feeling faint?"

"I think I am—a little," murmured David. The room seemed suddenly to rise and swirl around him. He felt as if he would fall. He was barely conscious of being supported to a sofa, of a flutter of fans, an offer of smelling-salts. Then he heard Ormistoun's voice.

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"This is my fault. The foolish fellow hasn't touched food since nine o'clock this morning. Of course he's faint. The heat, the excitement——"

"He shall sit quietly here and some supper shall be sent up to him," exclaimed Lady Pamela. "Mine shall be sent up, too. We'll have it here together. I'll look after him. Stephen, *do* go down; and, Auntie, you do the honours. I'm exceedingly hungry myself, so tell Yardly to let us have a nice picnic, and some cognac quick for Mr. David! He looks as if he were going to faint again."

"I'm very sorry. It's horribly foolish. I never did such a thing in my life," faltered David.

"You've gone through a great deal of mental excitement," said Lady Pamela with sudden gravity.

She was standing up waving a large fan to and fro before his face. How beautiful it was; how saint-like the purity of the eyes, the marble of the chiselled brow, the curve of the pale young lips!

"Well may I call you Saint David," she murmured. "You look as if you had stepped straight out of Heaven! As if you had never committed a sin, or thought a wicked thought! It's funny—to think of you *here*; in my drawing-room, alone—with me!"

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XIII

"IT has been an exciting day for you," said Ormistoun. "Too much so, perhaps. I wish you smoked. A quiet pipe, or even a cigarette and half an hour's talk in my study would be no bad preparation for bed."

"I don't smoke, but I have no objection to the half-hour's talk," said David. "The day has been exciting, as you say."

"Then off with boots and coats, and let's make ourselves comfortable. Thank goodness there are no women here! Are you sure you won't have anything?" he asked presently, when the programme had been carried out and they were sitting in comfortable untidiness before a cheery wood fire.

David shook his head. "I was made to eat all sorts of delightful things an hour ago. I can't manage another supper. I'm afraid I offended Lady Pamela by refusing her champagne. She seemed to think it a most extraordinary proceeding."

"It was—for Grosvenor Street, and that set. But didn't you have any wine, really?"

"Only soda-water. I'm a natural Rechabite, I think. The very smell of wine or spirits is distasteful."

"You'll not say no to my coffee, though? Richards makes it famously."

Richards appeared at the same moment, and put the coffee service and cups down beside his master. Then Ormistoun dismissed him for the night.

He poured out a cup for David and handed it to him. "The idea of your fainting like that!" he said.

"It seemed very foolish. I never did such a thing before. However, I'm all right again."

They drank their coffee in silence that lasted for some restful moments. David leant back in his chair, and Ormis-

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toun lit his favourite pipe and smoked with the enjoyment of brief deprivation.

"There was a time," he said suddenly, "when I gave up smoking in Lent by way of mortifying the flesh. I'm wiser now."

"You think we ought not to give up things we like just for an idea?"

"Certainly. And the Lenten fast is one of the ideas. Good enough, I grant, for those who are accustomed to eat and drink luxuriously; but for sober, temperate working-folk it is quite unnecessary. And now a word about your sermon. You don't mind?"

"Of course not."

"I can see that you are a born enthusiast. You believe all you say because it is easier for you to believe than to doubt. But it would have taken more than enthusiasm to create the sensation you did to-night; to make people *feel*; to draw tears from the hard, bright eyes of society beauties! You did that. It was a very great triumph."

"But—will it do any good?"

"I very much fear it won't. Still, as I told you, I wanted my audience to have an antidote for the poison I have been giving them. You seem to have made one convert, at all events. But I warn you she is dangerous."

"Who do you mean?"

"You know—I think: Lady Pamela. Beware of her fascinations, my dear boy. She tried them on me when she first professed an interest in my preaching. And, case-hardened old celibate as I am, she gave me some very uncomfortable hours."

"But she is a married woman?" faltered David.

"Well? Does a woman cease to be fascinating because she possesses a husband?"

"Oh, no. I only mean that no honourable man would allow himself to be drawn into that fascination—once he knew."

"How young you are!" exclaimed Ormistoun. "How little you know of the *real* things of life! I suppose you have lived more emotionally to-day than in any of the previous twenty-one years? You are only twenty-one, are you not?"

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"As far as I know."

He laughed a little nervously. "I went through a cross-examination about my age and parentage from that aunt of Lady Pamela's, the Countess of Silchester. She made me tell her all about where I was found and how I was brought up. She seemed to think there should have been some clue of identification about me."

"Was there nothing of the sort?"

"No. So I believe, at least. I am worse off than the recognized foundling. I am only a sea-waif. I often wonder if that accounts for my love of it. It is strange how restless I get if I am long away. It seems to call me and draw me like a living force."

Ormistoun was silent. He looked thoughtfully at the boy's beautiful face; read all its signs of race and breeding; wondered that for twenty-one years he had been content to exist without inquiry of any sort as to his own identity.

"So Lady Silchester cross-examined you?" he said presently. "She is the most inquisitive woman in London. People are so frightened of her that they really tell her the truth. They find it safer in the end. She is a woman entirely without feeling, and without mercy, unless she gets her own way. Her niece has to thank her for this marriage. It's detestable. And she loathed the man; but he is rich enough to finance royalty, and so it's all right. She seems contented enough now. I have thought that if her finer senses were ever touched she might become a really fine character. But—God help us! the life she lives, the absurd use that she, and such as she, make of time and money and influence! It is beneath contempt."

"Why does she? Those people to-night were not worthy of her attention. The men——"

"Yes—a queer lot, weren't they? That blond weasel is a loathsome creature. I hate to see him there. But he goes everywhere, because he can play Bridge magnificently and has an epigram to fit most situations in life. Also he is rich. As for Reuben Leaffe, or Levi, as he should call himself, why, the Three Balls, and the pound of flesh are stamped on every line of his swarthy, greasy face! If it were not for Lady Pam——"

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He paused. "There, I'm saying too much. I suppose you think one shouldn't eat a man's bread and then abuse him? I'm afraid that's very often done, though. I wonder if it will do you any harm to see a little of the seamy side of life, David? Pardon the slip, but one feels irresistibly compelled to use your less formal name."

"Pray do. It is more my name than any other, for my foster-father had me baptized and gave it to me at the font."

"Oh, is that so? I wonder you did not call yourself only that."

"Mr. Craddock and—the other, seemed to think I should have a surname."

"The other—means your friend of last night, of course?"

David nodded.

"A strange man," said Ormistoun thoughtfully. "You have seen him to-day?"

"Yes. It was he who took me to those tenements. Ah! I can't forget those dreadful alleys; those miserable dens where the poor are huddled together like animals. And in this great, rich City—it was horrible!"

"Was it your first glimpse of the poverty and wretchedness of a great city?"

"Yes. There's poverty in the country, of course, and in the villages and towns where I've been; but at least it seemed a clean and self-respecting thing, not like what I saw to-day."

"What made him take you?"

"I think it was to restore my shaken faith in the old simple truths that heal and console one. The strange thing was his own power; the effect he had; the love they seemed to bear him. Mr. Ormistoun, I should like to ask you—something."

"Ask."

"How can any one speak of things that happened generations ago? How could old people recognize him who had known him when they were children? How could men talk of thirty, forty years back, saying he had not altered in the smallest degree, and yet all the time that person himself look scarcely forty years of age? I have

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known him for nearly ten, and he looks just the same as when I first saw him."

"Are you speaking of your Peregrinator?" asked Ormistoun, smiling.

"Of course. This never occurred to me before. But something he said to-day made me think. It was so odd. And then following it came those poor, grateful creatures sobbing with delight at seeing him again; kissing his hands and blessing him and weeping tears of joy. And some were quite old people."

"It sounds rather extraordinary. But, you know, there are men and women who never seem to age, to whom Time is very kind."

"How old should you say this—the Wanderer—looks?"

"About forty; not more—even at his worst. And you must acknowledge he stamped himself Bohemian from top to toe last night."

"Last night," echoed David in a sudden tired voice. "Was it only last night? I seem to have lived years since then."

"You have crowded a great deal into one day's experience," said Stephen Ormistoun. "And I'm not going to let you cram any more," he added.

He rose and shook out the ashes of his pipe. "I should like to see some more of your Bohemian," he said. "When do you meet again? Could you bring him here?"

"I don't know," said David. "He wouldn't tell me if he was going to stay in London. He was in the church to-night, for I saw him. But—he is so strange. I never know when he will appear. Only I *do* know this. Whenever I have been in any need, any trouble, then he comes to me. It seems as if some sympathy exists between us that I have never discovered with any one else."

Ormistoun gave him a quick, searching look. "I have heard of such sympathy," he said. "The curious electric affinity between soul and soul, mind and mind; the way in which the thought of one reaches the other, the need of one cries to the other. There are truths we have yet to discover; mysteries to which Nature still holds the key. For my own part I have always held that thought can exercise its influence upon those we call the dead as

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well as upon the living. Some conscious desire is in the background of our lives and in the lives of those who stand beyond the border. Why should not the thing external to our desire respond to it? Vibrate to our passion and our prayer? Call in secret to lost love and lost joys, and win response? Ah, David, as time touches us and the pulse of life weakens, a new power quickens our souls. We do not fear the pathetic hopelessness of Death any longer. He comes as a friend, not a foe. The existence of the invisible world is more real the less we have to do with the visible."

David was silent.

Well might he say that he had lived years since the previous night.

When he was alone in his room, he drew up the blind and threw the window open.

All desire for sleep had gone. He only wished to be alone with his soul and God and the quiet mysteries of the night.

He longed for the sea; for its song and its rage and its restlessness; for the wide, wide spaces that here were merged into narrow streets and crowded roofs and the sluggish tide of that sullen river beyond. He had indeed lived years in these last twenty-four hours. So many emotions and experiences had been crowded into them. One memory of all seemed pressing home to him as he looked out at the quiet darkness. The *pain* of life. The sorrow and want and degradation crowded into these streets on which he gazed, under the roofs over which he looked. "No wonder Christ came to heal it," he thought, and even as he thought it the sharp sting of the Tempter's dart stabbed home. "*Did He heal it?*"

"Are things any better? Is there less sin, less suffering, less vice, less selfishness in this nineteenth century than there was eighteen hundred years ago? Is Christ remembered? Is His example followed? Is He worshipped in spirit and in truth? Are one of His precepts held as the guiding rule of life; social life, commercial life, domestic life?"

"You know they are not," went on the voice of the

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Tempter. "You know that the earth is filled with vile-ness, and the hearts of men with sin. What signify the few who are faithful? Christ's mission was to *all*. It has failed. You must acknowledge that. Every one who looks out on the earth as a whole must acknowledge it. The trail of the serpent is over it all. The evil overpowers the good."

And as David listened it seemed that the scheme of Creation was *not* faultless, and that of Atonement yet more imperfect.

The idea of purchasing man's redemption by blood became a painful and tragic idea, when one really *thought it out* instead of respecting it as a creed. And the blood of the sinless Son seemed to cry out in reproach to the relentless Father: "*My God! Why hast Thou forsaken Me?*"

It was more the cry of man than of Man's appointed Redeemer: the confessed weakness of humanity triumphing over the assertions of Divine descent.

"Look at the churches erected in His name," went on that pitiless voice; "the creeds professing His faith; the dogmas and superstitions rioting over human souls, and bringing them into a bondage quite as terrible as the sin from which they profess to save them. Which of them are true? Who can tell?"

And David's own mind echoed—Who can tell?

All the Christian churches believed that God's anger could only be appeased by *blood*; that hateful idea at which he had always shuddered; which had kept him from taking or administering the Sacrament because of that formula which attributed *reality* to the material elements of commemoration.

Morgan Craddock had told him long ago that the Mass of the Romish Church was but the old idea of Hebrew sacrifices and burnt offerings perpetuated by another form of priesthood. *That the priests might do something for the people which the people were forbidden to do for themselves!*

Based on that simple request at Christ's last earthly meal, how had it been twisted into a mere idolatry? Jesus had only bade His disciples "do this in remembrance of Me." He had not said: "Your priests shall do this,

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and you shall witness it ; and pour gold into their treasures, and behold them attired in magnificent raiment, blaspheming Me in their hearts by the hypocrisy of their lives ; telling you that only by this 'Mass' of propitiation can you enter Heaven, or win forgiveness of sin."

These things had not troubled David much up to this time, because the idea of his preaching was that simple form of independent effort which makes churches and altars and vestments of no account.

He had a message to deliver, and he would deliver it to those who cared to hear.

But to-day the whole fabric of simplicity had been rent like a cobweb. He had seen what the Church is ; what its services can be ; what a magnificent riot of sensations and effects can run through priestly ordinances.

The sensuous beauty of that morning's ceremony at St. Ninian's had been with him all the day. What he had said himself in that same pulpit of Stephen Ormistoun's he scarcely knew. He only remembered looking out at a sea of faces uplifted in the subtle gloom of shaded lights ; of saying to himself : " If Christ were here ?"—

He knew Christ never had preached to such a congregation. He had sought the mountain heights, the seashore, the harvest fields, the ordinary common people. The "fine flower" of civilization had never been gathered into His hands, or tied with the cords of His ministry. For a moment David had wondered what he could say to them. His previous text seemed inappropriate. Then suddenly the memory of his visit to those wretched hovels, the thought of the maimed and sick and suffering ones beyond these massive doors flashed to his mind. He would preach on that ; on the charity of Christ ; the mission of Christ ; the legacy of Christ. " If ye do it to the least of these, ye do it unto Me."

There had never been such an offertory service the doors of St. Ninian's opened to its consecration service !

And afterwards——

David thought of those splendid rooms, the luxury and beauty of Lady Pamela's surroundings ; of the comments and queries and excitement caused by his appearance ; of

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that half-hour when he had sat alone with this strange, lovely woman, and known her as all gentleness and seduction.

This—was what it meant to preach in London. To be gazed at, talked of, made a sensation of for some “smart” drawing-room, and then—forgotten.

What had Lady Pamela said to him ? “We are a little better here than most of the un-elect. We do go to church one day a week ; at least, in Lent. But for the other six—I’m afraid there’s not much to choose between us. Do help me ! I’d like to be good. I really would. And I’ve never met any one who *believed* what he preached, as you seem to believe it.”

And all the time she had drunk champagne, and eaten chicken salad, and macedoine and ices, and fed him with like dainties and looked so lovely and bewildering that the boy completely lost his head.

Even now, at the memory of her strange eyes, of the soft fragrance of her hair, the touch of her white hand, he grew faint and sick. The pure currents of his life seemed troubled, and by no angel’s presence. Impersonal feelings, indifference to sex *as sex*, passed into a background of puerile fancies.

Womanhood was a power ; a power to be reckoned with ; a subtle, disturbing, delicious harmony stealing over the heart’s manifold discords. He looked up at the dark steely sky where a few stars shone. His sensitive soul rushed heavenwards on the wings of an impassioned prayer. “She is unhappy, lonely, misunderstood ; she knows nothing of the comfort of Divine Love, the sustaining power of its great tenderness. Help me to speak of those truths so that she may know Thee and cling to Thee, and in the stormy seas of life, as life is here in this great wicked City, may preserve her soul pure and holy in Thy sight.”

He lifted his head, closed the window, and went within.

Possibly had she for whom he prayed heard that prayer, she would have been more astonished by its crude faith in herself than touched by its appeal on her behalf.

XIV

THE following week was not a period calculated to restore David's serenity. Ormistoun took him to tailors and bootmakers; to museums and galleries; to London's great historic pile of St. Paul's; through the charmed stillness and wonderful aisles of the Abbey. Midway in the week an invitation had come to them for a "Lenten dinner" on Friday night, at Lady Pamela's.

"Quite small and informal," she wrote; "a choice half-dozen kindred souls and a little music. Tell St. David I am still under the influence of last Sunday night. I have countermanded three new Paris gowns and given the money to a *crèche* in Kensington. This—for me who hate and detest babies—speaks for itself."

Ormistoun had smiled cynically as he handed the note to David. He was amused at the sudden flush, the rapid glance, the eager inquiry of uplifted eyes.

"Shall we go?"

"If you like, certainly. Your dress clothes are to be ready by Thursday night. I think we may safely accept."

David laughed. "Oh! I had forgotten. Of course, I could not have dined at Grosvenor Street without them."

"To our fraternity much is forgiven," said Ormistoun. "But you haven't even the organized clerical attire to excuse unconvictionality. So for you, at least, the swallow-tail is necessary. By the way, has it ever occurred to you to try for a scholarship and go to one of our Universities for a year or two? Of course, I know about St. Blasius. But it's not a recognized university. You're very young, you see, and if you wish to enter the ministry you'll have to do it by the orthodox doors."

"I haven't the least wish to become an 'orthodox' minister!" exclaimed David, "or to possess a church. I accepted my vocation as I told you; went through our

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Nonconformist ceremony, which to my conscience stands for ordination. I was permitted to preach as soon as I felt the Call to preach. That is my whole story in a nutshell."

"And you do not care about taking 'Orders'? The Church is more liberal-minded than it used to be, and you would be a shining light in these slack days."

David shook his head. "What I do I must do my own way. Christ was not ordained; Christ had no church, no special vestments. I want to follow only on His lines; the closer the better."

"Through persecution and betrayal—to Calvary?" asked Ormistoun ironically. Sometimes David irritated him. He was so absolutely impracticable.

"Even to Calvary! But that would be too great an honour. One is given so little to do for one's Lord in these days."

"I think you would be given enough both of service and persecution if you set yourself to seek it," said Ormistoun dryly. "Have a fling at Sacerdotalism; attack the Jesuistry of the Oxford Movement; challenge the authority of the Popish Chair. You'll find any one of these a very sufficient hornets' nest for you to stir up."

"And you want me to prepare for a Church that has so many imperfections! That can't be true even to itself?"

Ormistoun shrugged his shoulders.

"You see how hard it is to escape old prejudices. I thought your name would be the better for 'Reverend' attached to it. But I suppose you'll be telling me that the title is a misnomer nowadays? Our office no longer deserves reverence, however imperiously it may demand it?"

"Then what's the use of the empty title?" asked David.

"Convention, as I said before. Just as I give the formal service, or at least a part of it, in my church; holding to myself only the right to preach as I please. I am just dangerous enough to be safe; a troublesome son of the Church, but still within the pale of sonship."

He rose from the breakfast-table and gathered up his correspondence.

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"I shall be busy over my letters till lunch-time," he said. "Would you like to go out? I think you know your bearings by this time."

"Oh, I shan't lose myself," said David. "I have to write to the Squire, and then I'll go City-wards along the Embankment."

"Be here at one o'clock," said Ormistoun. "I'm going to take you to Richmond this afternoon."

David went to his own room and sat down before the writing-table. He felt he ought to write to Ruth. Except for a card to announce his arrival he had not yet sent her any news of himself.

He wrote now at length, telling her of his Sunday experiences; of the wonders of London—the full, busy hours. It was not a lover's letter, but David was very far from being a "lover" in the accepted term. He was very fond of little Ruth and she was devoted to him, and some day, as yet far distant to his preoccupied mind, he would marry her and live with her in some little nook of their beloved Cornwall. That was all their present position meant to him.

Having finished the letter, he addressed a few lines to the Squire. He spoke of Ormistoun very guardedly. He also mentioned the Grosvenor Street acquaintances, and his *rencontre* with the Wanderer.

"He has disappeared again," he added, "and I have no choice but to wait on his reappearance. Mr. Ormistoun was immensely interested, and I think as puzzled as we were at first. I preach the next five Sundays, as arranged. After that I shall return to Trebarwick, if agreeable to yourself. These Church Festivals—Lent, Easter, Whitsuntide—seem strange to me. We take no count of them save as Bible records of phases in our Lord's life, or those of His disciples. But in the Established Church ritual seems everything. It is forcing the spirit of religion into subservience to the *form* of it. The passionate arguments, the humiliating controversies on every petty point of prerogative, ecclesiasticism, and informality seem to me absolutely beneath contempt. The name of the Founder of the Christian Church is ignored. But the names of those who *rule* that Church by virtue of office, are for ever

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being lauded and worshipped. The Archbishops and Bishops of the Church of England are really as important in their own eyes, and those of the minor clergy, as the Pope of Rome himself. Only—so I hear—they are not obeyed so implicitly. For instance, there is a tremendous controversy raging at the present time on the authority of 'Eucharistic vestments.' I have not gone into the matter. Mr. Ormiston merely explained a few points. But it seems to me absolutely childish to fight over what *dresses* the clergy are to wear, and how much embroidery and tinsel are necessary for their trimming! Can they think that this sort of thing is pleasing to God? God who so distinctly says: '*Man* looketh at the outward appearance,' but He at the heart? It is indeed bringing Him down to the level of man, and a very low level too! Things like these make me glad I never formally enrolled myself under any banner save that of the Christ I serve; the Master I reverence."

His letters finished, David went out as he had said, and proceeded up the Embankment as far as Ludgate Circus. The day was mild and spring-like, the sky as blue as those of Cornwall. Even the river looked less murky and dingy as he watched its inflowing tide.

A sense of life and energy stimulated him. It seemed good to be alive and to be young, and to have an important mission to fulfil. His eyes rested on the dome of the great Cathedral. How noble it looked, set there above the City streets, the warm sun shedding its radiance over the soaring cross.

That Cross. Everywhere upraised, everywhere dishonoured: an insignia of sectarian quarrels.

Its early meaning had been one of shame. Only miscreants of the worst type had been condemned to its punishment. It towered now above one of the mightiest cities of the world as emblem of faith in God; honoured where it had been dishonoured; glorified where it had been disdained. And yet—was it not still dishonoured by its pretended followers? Did it really stand for Christ's sovereignty in the present day? Did these poor toiling slaves of the great City over which it stood, ever look up

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to it and think of Him who had borne it on His shoulders, and suffered torture for man's sinful sake ?

Possibly they never thought of it at all. In these offices and marts, the Stock Exchange and business houses, what mattered that the emblem of the Crucified One stood in their midst ; overshadowed sin and usury, dishonour and rapacity ; lifted itself to the silent heavens in silent appeal that still man might receive more mercy than he gave—or deserved ?

Under the great arched bridge, amidst the thunders of traffic and trains, David went ; his eyes scanning the hurrying crowds, the anxious faces—never a smile on any of them. Never the brightness of youth or the peace of age ; only strain, haste, impatience, excitement. And around the magnificent structure of one of the world's greatest architects the scene was even more appalling. A wilderness of shops, an ever-hurrying crowd ; no wide, quiet space for reverence and solitude ; no fit surroundings for an edifice that crowned a Christian City with scarce remembered tragedy ; only noisy streets and rushing crowds ; toiling men and women, and children with no youth in their childhood, no joy in their sunless lives !

David went slowly up the broad stone steps into the grey solitude within. There a sense of emotion and reverence held him still and speechless for many moments. He sank quietly down upon his knees.

The last time he had been there was at the time of service, and Ormistoun had been with him. Now the great building was empty save for a few sightseers in the nave. It appealed to him more strongly than when he had first seen it. All its beautiful, venerable architecture ; all that had gone to the moulding of its history ; its transitions and translations from bigotry and superstition, down to modern ritual. These things rushed to his mind and filled his heart with awe. A sudden passionate desire swept over him. Oh, to preach *there* ! To stand in that wonderful pulpit and speak one's whole soul out to a listening crowd that should acknowledge the message and "repent, and be made whole" !

If such a thing might ever be !

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But even as he thought, he knew the wish was vain. God's house and God's altars were fenced round with the saving grace of Sacerdotalism. The Faith of Christ was a thing of forms and pomp. The Church was, indeed, sacrosanct; keeping a strong door closed between conformity and sincerity; shut in by might of ceremonial from all such sacrilegious intrusion as that of the unordained, untrained preacher.

"They would not admit Christ Himself if he came here at this moment," thought David. "They would ask for His certificate of ordination; His university, His credentials. Things that are true have no chance against organized traditions. The believer, the enthusiast of to-day must be the official presentment of strict orthodoxy; be sent by his superiors, not claim his own freedom. It is a mad dream that I shall ever speak to a world. Never can I touch more than one small fragment of it!"

He rose from his knees and wandered round the vast building, modelled on its famous prototype of Rome. Compared with the lavish ornamentation and tawdriness of the French churches he had seen, this place looked very bare. But it had a noble simplicity—a massive grandeur worthy of the man who had been laid to rest under its stones; the architect whose epitaph was truer than that of most great men: "*Si monumentum requiris circumspice.*"

"It is a fine place—yes, but St. Peter's is finer," said a voice close to David.

He turned. He saw an old man—tonsured, clean-shaven, and dressed like a foreign priest.

"I speak less to myself than I fancy," he said as he met David's eyes. "I make here my first visit, though I have lived so long in this country. You, monsieur, you also look as if you were not altogether familiar with your great national church?"

"I am not. This is only the second visit I have paid to it," said David.

"Is that so? But you English are strange! You live years, half your lives in a place, and trouble not yourselves to go and see one of your national landmarks. The Ameri-

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can, he teaches you more of your country than you know for yourselves."

"I daresay," said David. "But I have a good excuse, for my acquaintance with London is only a matter of days."

"Is it so? I observe you were much interested. I also noted that you said your little prayer of reverence before you make the tour of inspection. That is not usual for the young men of your country, or your age. With us of France it is different. We are early trained in these little observances. It is a good fault, is it not?"

"It is not a fault at all."

"I am pleased you say that. I wonder—I may be forming a mistake—but I think you have some of the signs of Church office about you? It may be you are a student of divinity?"

David shook his head.

"Not so? A pardonable mistake. But you have the face of a spiritualist. I—I was trained in a school that knows how to read such signs."

David looked at the old man with sudden interest. "You are a Catholic priest, are you not?"

"I am Père François, the priest of a little French chapel in Soho. It is many years since I left France. It has become a place of terror and ungodliness. Even in my little congregation I have much to do to fight with doubt and Atheism, and indifference to the Holy Church. The poison of the upas tree is this modern Theology; this prying into God's holy mysteries; the denial of the Blessed Saviour's immaculate birth! Such things are not meant for secular discussion. Avoid them, my son, if you would have a clear conscience and a pure heart. The Great God is a God of mysteries. He does not explain himself to man, who is lower than the angels. Only by faith can these things be accepted. One should pray for faith if one has it not. You pardon that I speak thus frankly to you? But I like your face, and in God we are all one. It is man who makes the stupid distinctions by his pride and his obstinacy."

"Indeed, I am very glad you spoke to me," said David. "For although I am not a priest, or even a student of the priesthood, I only live to preach Christ's message to man."

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"How? But this is strange for a confession! You have no ordination for such an office, and yet you take it on yourself?"

"Yes," said David simply. "Surely there is something higher that calls us to the office than the routine of a seminary, and the formalities of what is called 'ordination'?"

The old priest crossed himself suddenly.

"My son, this seems to me an affair very serious. Although I am not of your faith, I know that also to the Protestant ministry there is a form to be observed; a novitiate to be undertaken. What, then, is the nature of this 'call' of yours that supersedes all rites and restrictions appointed by your Church?"

"Well, it is so simple a thing that one word explains it. Christ called His disciples when He needed them. He called me."

The old man looked at the grave young face and wondered if he was listening to the rhapsodies of some new saint; if this was the outcry of real religiosity, or the mere fanaticism of ignorance? He had heard such declarations, received such confessions, but never given with such calm assurance—such simple faith in themselves.

"I would he were on our side," he thought. "This is what we need; the true convert, the true enthusiast. We have so few now. Almost I begin to think our training is at fault. We forbid question; we forbid doubt; and the inquiry returns upon itself and feeds on its own unsatisfied desires. Then comes an hour when the smothered spark bursts into flame, and we have either a renegade or a hypocrite to deal with."

David's voice recalled him from his puzzled musings. "I am afraid I must wish you good day, Père François. I have an appointment to keep. But I am glad you spoke to me."

"And I am glad too, my son. I hope we may see each other yet again. Although we hold a different form of Faith, still the faith is there. *Le bon Dieu*, he reads the heart and knows its strength and its weakness. I do not think there is much in your heart that you need fear to show Him."

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He raised his hand. "An old man's blessing will not harm thee, my son, and if in any stress or trouble it would comfort thee to seek spiritual advice or confess thy needs and thy sorrows to a fellow-sufferer, come to my little chapel—East Street, Soho—and ask for me. Always I shall be at thy service, if I am alive and able to fulfil my mission. *Benedicat te omnipotens Deus, Pater et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus. Amen.*"

Involuntarily David bent his head to the solemn words. He loved their sonorous music, their beautiful meaning. They went with him on his homeward way like the consecration of a prayer.

Were there many Romish priests like this, he wondered? Large-minded, liberal, comprehending? Peace and goodness seemed enthroned in those kindly eyes that had met his own; on that gentle, saintly face. Yet he had been told that the priests of Rome were arch-fiends in disguise. Jesuitical, untrustworthy, tyrannical.

"He is none of these, I am sure, that good Père François. I should like to see him again. I wonder if he would tell me about his Order—about his Church? The *real* truth. Why they say they are the one and only true Church, appointed by Christ, carried on by apostolic succession? In that book the Squire gave me the young priest tells so little: not half of what I should like to know. And that half is terrible; all the deception that goes on; the horrible system of spying and reporting on each other, so that the whole great fabric of Catholicism is like a web in whose centre sits an arbitrary being they call the Pope. And he, so they say, will be content with nothing less than the subjection of the whole Christian world. It is not the religion I find fault with, despite its overflow of ceremonies. It is the *system*. The terrible, cruel, tyrannical system; the way in which the highest and best things are sacrificed to worldly aims. A great scientist, a great writer, a great patriot would have no field for his talents if he were subservient to priestly control. Look at the darkness of the Middle Ages when Catholicism ran riot throughout the world! I cannot but think that if it *was* the religion Christ founded, if it *was* founded on the rock of His example, it would never have been overthrown;

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and in every country where it reigned we should have found the blessed fruits of its teaching. But we don't find them. Almost all Roman Catholic countries are poor, vicious, immoral, and untrustworthy: France, for instance, and Spain, and Italy and Ireland. None of these show the lofty principles and high aims and clean living that should and must spring from the life of God's true followers! There is ample proof that Rome has drifted farther and farther from the pure and simple tenets of Christ's own teaching. Why has she always restrained liberty of thought and personal criticism of the Scriptures? Forbidden the Bible itself until forced to allow a certain liberty of action by the awakening forces of civilization? I should like to put these questions to Père François. I wonder if he could answer them—satisfactorily?"

Then he went in and found Stephen Ormistoun waiting for him, and they set off together for Richmond.

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XV

IT was with an extraordinary feeling of excitement that David saw himself in orthodox evening-dress waiting for Ormistoun's appearance in his study. He had been so long used to unconventional garb that the restraint of formal garments was not agreeable. But discomfort was outweighed by the thought of the gracious, bewildering woman in whose honour they were worn.

"Is it right? Will I do?" He was blushing like any schoolboy before the criticizing glance thrown over him.

"Yes, they look all right," said Stephen Ormistoun. "Let no one deny that clothes, like manners, 'makyth the man.' My dear boy, you will be proclaimed Saint Adonis instead of Saint David."

"All the same, I shall be wishing myself back in my old serge suit all the evening," said David. "Your man had to fix my collar and tie for me. I was helpless."

"Oh, you'll get used to it once you begin!" said Ormistoun, glancing at the clock. "We'd better have a hansom round. Punctuality for dinner is the only rule that society deigns to observe."

When they were shown into Lady Pamela's drawing-room they found her the centre of a small group consisting of Lady Silchester, a dazzling little woman introduced as Mrs. Peter Van Hoorn from New York, a dark, strange-looking girl whose name David did not catch, and two men. One of them was the "blond weasel" who played Bridge so well; the other, an elderly, well-preserved man, was presented as Lord Ulwell. He knew Ormistoun, but he looked at David with undisguised astonishment.

"I assure you, Mr. Hermon," he said, "I have heard such extraordinary accounts of you that I have been on tenterhooks of curiosity. I missed your first lecture last

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Sunday night, but Lady Pamela has told me it made an extraordinary sensation."

"So it did!" exclaimed Lady Pamela eagerly. "I've been hearing about it wherever I went. You'll double your congregation next Sunday night, Saint David. And the reporters and interviewers will be on your heels after that."

Mrs. Van Hoorn swooped down upon them before David could reply.

"Why, if this isn't downright splendid!" she exclaimed. "I've been hearing of you all the time, Mr. David Hermon, and only to-day Lady Pam said you were to be here. Come right along and talk to me. I'm from Amurrica, you know. I guess we're just *keen* on religion over there. I'm half a Christian Scientist myself. I'd go the whole hog, but I want to clear up a point or two. Maybe you could help."

She had drawn David from the immediate circle, and he found himself seated by her side on a brocade settee without a very clear idea of how he came to be there.

He had never met an American yet. The volubility of this lady's outpourings dazzled him as much as her diamonds. She wore a black dress—as, indeed, did all the women except Lady Pamela, who had merely turned herself into a violet cloud as a concession to Lent.

"Well, as I was saying," went on Mrs. Van Hoorn, "I met Lady Pam at Rumpelmyer's this afternoon, and she asked me if I'd just waive ceremony and come around to dinner. She said you'd be here. The Boy Evangelist was what she called you. My—and you *do* look such a kid, if you'll pardon my saying so! What made you take up preaching? Think you'd got a call that way?"

She did not mean to be ill-oared. It was only part and parcel of her national assets that she should be inquisitive, loud-voiced, and quaintly interesting.

"I—I beg your pardon," faltered David, "but I am not accustomed to discussing serious matters in—in company."

"Is that so? Then I guess you'll never go far. Why, when I was taking up Science I just talked it wherever I went. I simply *had* to. There's no one can enthuse like

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an Amurrican when they've got something to enthuse about; and Christian Science has right down got hold of us for a time. Of course, you know all about it?"

"I never heard of it till this moment," said David.

"Never—heard—of Christian Science! My—think of that! What would Mrs. Eddy say if I told her? She just imagines every one in the four quarters of the globe knows of it. A most remarkable woman. But you've heard of *her*? Don't say——"

"No," said David.

"Well, that's real funny. She's the Christ of Christian Science. She's awfully well advertized, and her church is just going to be *the* church of the future. She's been awful cute. She knows that when women have a say in anything, that thing's bound to *go*. Now, women are a vurry important body in this church—see? There *must* be a woman reader for the services. We were mighty tickled over that notion at first. But there's no doubt it *drew*. Women had done most things that men do—or leave undone—but they hadn't just fixed themselves as preachers. Here was their chance. And the church is just perfectly independent. It don't take any account of governments or spiritual heads. It's just enough for Itself. And a woman founded it. A woman did it all! Doesn't that strike you as a display of moral courage and spiritual activity?"

"If I could—if you would explain—what exactly Christian Science *is*?" implored David feebly.

"Explain? Well, I've been doing that! Oh, but here comes Lady Pam to take you away. My *dear*, I've had the most delightful talk with your young evangelist. He's just keen on Science. And—what? Oh! Lord Ulwell, are *you* going to take me into dinner? I call that just sweet of Lady Pam; now, isn't it?"

David was still listening confusedly to the vibrating American accent when he felt a light touch on his arm.

"Come along, you're my charge. You look quite dazed. Was Mrs. Van Hoorn too much for you? She is rather fond of talking. But then, all Americans are. They'd think it a sin to be silent while they had a single idea left in their brains. And now, how have you been all this

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week, and what have you been doing? Have you ever thought of—me?"

They were on the staircase when she asked that question; asked it very softly, with an upward glance from the gold-flecked eyes, and a little confidential pressure of the arm she held. David felt suddenly breathless. She looked so lovely in that shaded light, her throat and shoulders glowing through a veiled haze of tulle and chiffon. Only to look at her was to breathe enchantment.

Here, again, was a new experience: the seduction of sex in a new aspect. Woman in the semi-nude, delicate suggestiveness of evening toilette—inspiring, provoking, enchanting; perfectly aware of suggestion and provocation, yet appearing unconscious of either.

"I have thought of you a great deal," he said confusedly. "I wondered if you meant all you said last Sunday night."

Lady Pamela threw her mind back with an effort. What had she said? Ensuing days and nights had been so full of other excitements and other episodes that she could not exactly recall this special one. Fortunately their arrival at the dining-room door and the interruption of seating themselves rendered evasion easier than response.

She gave a quick glance over the table. It was decorated only with violets in silver bowls. A long strip of black satin bordered thickly with the same flowers went down the centre. Tall silver candelabra shaded with orchid-coloured shades threw a subdued light over snowy damask and glittering silver and crystal. The "Lenten effect," as she called it, was quite admirable.

David noted that her husband was absent, and remarked on the fact.

"Oh, I don't have him except I'm obliged!" she answered. "And he's generally got some big thing on. Public dinners and speeches, or a set of South African magnates at his club. This evening is specially for you. I hope you appreciate the compliment?"

"It is very kind of you," he said.

She made a little grimace, and refused the clear soup which the footman brought.

"How formal! Don't you ever unbend except you get on your own ground?"

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"I—I'm afraid I don't understand," he stammered.

"I'm quite sure you don't. Never mind; your education's only just begun. What did Mrs. Van Hoorn talk to you about? Christian Science?"

"Yes," he said eagerly. "And I was obliged to confess I'd never heard of it. What really is it? An American religion?"

"One of the nine hundred and ninety-nine that they've discovered over there," answered Lady Pamela. "But, so far, it's about the only one they've taken the trouble to transplant."

"From the name I suppose it means the Science of Christianity?" said David.

"About that. I've not had time to go far into it. But, according to Mrs. Van Hoorn, they can cure every mortal illness by faith. And they're always smiling to show how happy they are at being able to do it. In fact, if you're 'in Science,' as they call it, you must be always smiling at the people who're not. It's an insignia of superiority. But she'll tell you all about it. She goes to their church in Sloane Street, and once she even testified."

"Testified?"

"It's part of the religion. You stand up and tell the whole congregation that you had consumption, or bronchitis, or indigestion, and applied Christian Science, and since then you've used no other, like the man with Pear's soap. I went once. I make it a point to investigate everything, you know. I came away thinking I'd been attending a popular Patent Medicine advertising show. All sorts of people got up and told you all their complaints, and how the doctors had done no good, and so they took up Science (like Pink Pills and Liver Pads), and were quite cured; and then they gave thanks to some one called 'Mrs. Eddy.' But you're not touching your dinner. It's only fish. I've had three fish courses, all different, so as to suit you and His Reverence."

David helped himself to something that looked like frozen snow with tiny green hailstones sprinkled over it.

"About this Mrs. Eddy?"—he went on. "Mrs. Van Hoorn mentioned her—as very 'cute,' whatever that means."

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"Mrs. Eddy is the discoverer of Christian Science—at least, she says she is. But some 'cuter' Americans found out that she had borrowed the idea from another mental healer; got hold of all his prescriptions and published them as her own. Of course, the 'Science people' get mad if you say that, just as Roman Catholics get mad if you say a word against the Pope. Mrs. Eddy is the American Pope, and publishes edicts and things. She's put all these notions into a book which everybody must buy or they can't be a Christian Scientist. Oh! but won't you have dry sherry? *Do.* I'm not giving champagne because we're all mortifying the flesh."

"Thank you, I never touch wine. I told you so the other night, if you remember?"

"So you did. But it seems so funny. Water, Dawson, for this gentleman. I don't know if we have any. But look in the cistern. Oh, there's Aunt Thusa trying to attract your attention. I believe she wanted to go in to dinner with you, and I wouldn't let her. Yes, Auntie, what is it?"

"I only wished to remark that you are giving Mr. Hermon quite a wrong idea of Christian Science," said Lady Silchester loudly.

"Never mind. You and Mrs. Van Hoorn can put him right after dinner. Couldn't she do a little miracle or something for us? It would be much more convincing."

David felt as if his brain were giving way. The manner in which Mrs. Van Hoorn and then Lady Pamela had rattled off their definition of a new religion, bewildered him.

Lady Pamela suddenly dashed off into another topic. The spinning kaleidoscope of her mind was perpetually revolving and perpetually forming new patterns. But in London weeks she did try to keep within bounds of "churchy" subjects. She described a service at the Brompton Oratory, and added the information that the subdued tones of violet and black had inspired her table of to-night.

David took the opportunity of relating his visit to St. Paul's and his meeting with Père François.

"And you talked to him? How brave of you! As a rule Protestant clerics shun Romish ones. I like them.

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I've known heaps. They're either dears, or devils. Which was Père François ? ”

“Certainly not a devil,” said David, rather shocked at the liberality of the definition. “He was just a scholarly, gentle old man, with the kindest face I've ever seen.”

“And didn't he call you a heretic and ask you to confess your sins ? ”

“Certainly not. But he made me feel that if I ever wished to confess my sins I would like to do so to him.”

“Dangerous. You see how subtly they work ? Most of the converts to Rome are made by first confusing their minds, and then professing to take all the burden of doubt and disturbance off them. Have you ever been to the Oratory ? I suppose not. You've only just come to London. Get His Reverence to take you. It's so soothing. I'm awfully pleased about having incense at St. Ninian's. I gave Stephen no peace till he had it. It's so assisting. One can only wake up emotions by externals. Isn't that so, Stumps ? ”

She turned to her left-hand neighbour with her usual abruptness.

“I didn't catch the drift of the observation,” said Lord Ulwell. “Something about emotions ? ”

“I was telling Mr. Hermon that emotion is the readiest road to the soul. Therefore to wake our emotions all means are excusable. That's why no church is complete without music and incense and forms. The Romanists found that out long ago. They knew that people don't want to *understand*, only to be sensitized. I felt so good after I came back from the Oratory this afternoon that I made the florist take away all the bright coloured flowers and bring violets. And my maid thought I was mad when I insisted on her cutting out that strip of satin from a Court gown of mine. I only wore it once because some seventy-fifth cousin of Royalty had died the week before. So inconsiderate, with all the Drawing-rooms coming off—and only a Schleswig-something ! ”

Lord Ulwell laughed. “You are always ready for a new emotion, I know, Pam. Possibly the florist suffered more inconvenience than yourself by that change of mind.”

“Oh, I never thought about him ! People of that sort

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must expect to have a little trouble. What else do we pay them for ? Tradespeople are really the most inconsiderate race. They pester us with bills, and then make a fuss if we countermand an order."

All of which was Greek to David.

"Mr. Hermon," said a voice breaking in upon his thoughts. He glanced at his opposite neighbour, Lady Silchester. "Mr. Hermon, I've been thinking very seriously of that matter of the wreck. Could you furnish me with the *date* upon which it occurred ?"

David considered a moment. "I'm afraid I can't: only the month and the year."

"Well, that is something. I must say I never met with such culpable neglect of important facts as you have manifested. But I am determined to find out everything about you that can be found out."

"Oh ! but really there's no need to trouble," stammered David, annoyed to find so many eyes turned in his direction.

"Trouble !" exclaimed the strident voice of Mrs. Van Hoorn. "Who's in trouble ? Science can help him, I guess. It's done so a good few times even in my limited experience. Mortal mind's the cause—just that. You kind of get rid of mortal mind, and the All-Good comes right away down to you in place of it. Of course, though," she went on, seeing that every one was listening perforce, "trouble don't *really* exist any more than pain or sickness. You've just got to get rid of that fallibility soon as ever you look into Science. Demonstrate it to yourself, and you'll find it's got no sure foundation."

"Then what's the use of demonstrating it ?" asked Stephen Ormistoun.

"Now, Mr. Ormistoun, I guess you're trying to *have* me ; and I'm too much of a tyro in Science to explain it quite clearly. They say Mrs. Eddy herself can't do *that*. Anyway, her book doesn't. But if you get the book you can begin straight away at once and cure yourself of any mental *or* physical trouble that's afflicting you."

Ormistoun smiled. "I have read the book," he said. "A more extraordinary jumble of muddled logic and mixed theology I never came across !"

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"Oh, now, you shouldn't say that, Mr. Ormistoun, although you *are* a clergyman. It's a real fine piece of work; deep, I grant. You've got to *think*. And it's that that does the cure. While you're thinking the pain leaves you, and you forget you're sick, and then the sense of Infinite Love takes possession of your soul, and you feel right down *good*. It's a beautiful feeling and must come from a beautiful source."

"Every one's beginning to talk about it," observed the strange-looking girl whom David only heard addressed as "Tucks." "A friend of a friend of mine said he was going to try it for spinal complaint. He seemed to think it would be easier than plaster of Paris."

"So it would," said Mrs. Van Hoorn. "You see, they reckon the Christian Church lost its healing power some centuries ago. At least, it *thinks* it lost it; but 'twas there all the time, *overlaid*, as it were, by unbelief of mortal mind. Now, Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy has found out that the power exists not only in the Church, but in every one who comes into Science. You can do away with pain and sickness of body as soon as ever you get right with your mind."

"And how is that accomplished?" asked Ormistoun, smiling.

Every one was listening now, even the footmen. Mrs. Van Hoorn was in her element.

"Why, you've just got to tell yourself that there's *no such thing as pain or sickness!*"

"Then," said Ormistoun, "you discover that you possess a faculty for which there's no use. Something which, after being lost to the world for centuries, has *never been* lost, is re-discovered in order to prove that its object is non-existent."

Mrs. Van Hoorn expanded into a Christian Science smile.

"Wal, put like *that*, Mr. Ormistoun, it does sound perplexing. But, as I told you, I'm only a beginner. I guess it's like this. Pain and sickness *do* seem to exist to those who are not *in* Science. When you *are* in—why, you just see that all the rest is illusion of mortal mind. The truth sets you free. Science mentally applied heals you of any

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such illusion ; teaches the non-existence of matter and the Allness of Spirit."

"The non-existence of matter would be a difficult thing to prove," said Ormistoun. "In fact, it would abolish the existence of Mrs. Eddy herself. I know in her book she talks of matter as being 'self-created,' 'a human belief,' 'an error,' and various other logical impossibilities. But she can give no proof other than '*I*—think it; therefore it is so.' Still, the prophetess herself is about as mortal and fallible as her traducers or her friends. She certainly borrowed her scraps of philosophy from Spinoza, and her ideas of faith-healing from Phineas Quimby. Her doctrines are her own—fortunately; but, like her science, they're very unconvincing."

"Well," said Mrs. Van Hoorn, "I can't get up my points right away without my textbook. I only know that since I began to read up Christian Science I've never had any sort of stomach trouble, and I used to be a perfect martyr to puerile dyspepsia in Amurrica!"

This frank outburst successfully changed the subject, and, after some dallying with crystallized violets and purple grapes, Lady Pamela signalled a retreat.

The three men drew their chairs closer round the pretty oval table, and lit cigarettes. David looked on.

"Rum people—Americans," observed Lord Ulwell, whose passion for cricket had won for him the nickname of "Stumps." "Always ready to take up any new crank or fad that crops up. Fancy a pretty little woman like that, and as material as they make 'em (judging from the frankness of her dressmaker), talking of Christian Science as if she believed it."

"Possibly she does," drawled Teddy Adair, whom Ormistoun had called a "blond weasel." "Women can make themselves believe anything they wish; even that they can wear white muslin at seventy and look seventeen!"

As this was a feat constantly attempted by Teddy's own mother, a brisk society dame well over three score and ten, it was not deemed advisable to pursue the subject.

Lord Ulwell fell back on a new brand of cigarettes just

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put on the market, and plunged into the topic with Stephen Ormistoun. Adair, whom no one ever called anything but Teddy, turned to David. He laid a thin, cold hand on his arm.

"I hadn't a word with you on Sunday," he said; "and I was dying to ask you how you did it."

"Did—what?" inquired David.

"Get hold of Lady Pam and her set. Not easy. They go in for being both smart and serious. I fancy Pam's sampled half a score of religions in as many years. But this seems like the real thing—two Sunday services and one weekday. You heard what she said about the Oratory?"

"Yes," said David, releasing his arm.

"I never knew of her going to a weekday Mass, or whatever they call it. Vespers, isn't it? I hope she won't 'get religion,' as the lower orders cleverly put it. There are so few amusin' women in London."

"Would an interest in religion make Lady Pamela less—interesting?" asked David.

"Depends on how she took it up; as an episode or an antidote."

"An antidote," echoed David, "against life's poison, you mean?"

"Not exactly," said Adair, with an odd smile. "There's no harm in life—considered reasonably. You know, it commenced in a pleasure garden, though it's drifted into a queer sort of pandemonium. We sensible folk are trying to get back to the pleasure garden."

"You linger a long time in the pandemonium by way of preparation," interposed Ormistoun.

"To give you preachin' Johnnies a chance. Eh, what?"

"Effort that's wasted is worse than none," announced Ormistoun, turning away from the sneering face he so disliked.

"That's not encouraging, is it, Mr. Hermon? By the way, have you been to any of the other shows?"

David looked puzzled.

"Saint Alban's; Cowley Fathers; Farm Street Chapel? Rattlin' fun, some of 'em. Crowded like a first night at the theatre. You ought to go. Actors love to see each

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other act, and preachers ought to hear each other preach. It's an object-lesson—in both cases."

David was silent. This sort of conversation was beyond him.

"There's a slump in religion at the present moment," continued Adair, "so you ought to catch on. And if you do, life could be made very pleasant. Why, Pam and her lot could run any church they chose. She's always doin' surprisin' things, is Pam. But her master stroke was marryin' Reuben Leaffe. You know, he's a Jew and swore he'd never marry a Christian! He hates us and——"

David suddenly moved his chair. "Please don't tell me of Lady Pamela's private affairs," he said. "They are no concern of mine."

Teddy Adair looked astonished. It was new to him to be snubbed for retailing other people's *histoires*. As a rule his knowledge of such matters was a passport into the "best circles," as the servants' hall has it.

"You don't mean to say you are indifferent to antecedents? Why, they're all that give one a clue to character! If you don't know something about a person's character you can't know them. I assure you what I said is public, not private, property. But possibly London is an unknown book to you. You look as if you'd just left school."

He lit a fresh cigarette and helped himself to Grand Marnier. Lord Ulwell had heard that last speech and smiled with some amusement. Teddy never forgot his manners unless he was angry. What had the boy cleric done to arouse his wrath?

"You mustn't mind Adair, Mr. Hermon," he said. "He's our privileged Court Jester. And I hope you are old enough to believe that youth is the best thing in life."

"Only youth never believes it," said Ormistoun.

"All London—I mean all that artistic and excellent side of London which frequents St. Ninian's—has been discussing two points of last Sunday's innovation. The extreme youth of the preacher; the extreme novelty of his views. One expects much from your pulpit, Ormistoun. Yet you have outdone—expectation."

"I have only gone back to primitive faith as a whole-

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some corrective of modern unbelief," said Ormistoun. "It does people no harm to have plain bread and milk after a surfeit of rich food."

"I see the idea. It would be interesting to find that Mr. Hermon could restore our lost faith and our lost ideals. The only question is what should we do with them? We have put away childish things so long that it would seem ridiculous to take them up and play with them again."

"Possibly Ormistoun thinks his church needs a little whitewashing?" sneered Adair. "Or the Bishop has been making inquiries. If it weren't that he is one of those fortunate people who *may* look over the wall as well as steal the horse, he'd have been called to account long ago."

Ormistoun shrugged his shoulders. "There are higher flights than mine," he said, "and as yet no shot has brought them down. I'm not afraid."

"It would be rather difficult to circumscribe the area of your flight," said Lord Ulwell, rising. "It has taken so many curves and circles. I'm always wondering where it will end. You'd be too dangerous for the lawn sleeves, I'm afraid. Otherwise I might have sent a whisper to the right quarter. Shall we go upstairs? Pam said a lot of people were coming in, and Rinaldi is to sing."

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MORE bewilderment awaited David when he found himself in the drawing-room. The party had been augmented by a small crowd of people. Lady Pamela introduced him to nearly all the women. It appeared they were all members of the "serious-smart set" and part of the congregation of St. Ninian's.

Although David was ignorant of the fact, these women had gone down in a fit of sensuous aberration before the spiritual beauty of his face and the extraordinary fervour of his preaching. To meet him thus—shy, boyish, reticent—was quite a refreshing sensation. He looked like a young Christ, they told each other, with that halo of golden curls, that serene, calm young face. But they found him very impossible. David had no small change of wit and light talk to give them in exchange for their flattery or their praise. They made him uncomfortable and unnatural. Besides, it seemed to him horrible to have one's most sacred thoughts and convictions put up for show, so to say, in an assemblage of society folk. These *décolletée* women and tired, dissipated-looking men inspired him with the same disgust he had felt when Teddy Adair had clasped his arm and looked into his eyes. They were a different order of beings. Nothing could make them assimilate with himself.

This bright, dazzling life, this atmosphere of wealth and luxury, these pleasure-seeking yet pleasure-sated people, all affected him with a sense of unreality. It seemed as if they could never be in earnest about anything except what ministered to their affectation of enjoyment. Their present idea of taking up Lent seriously and going every Sunday to St. Ninian's, was only part of a pose that it suited them to adopt, because Lady Pamela desired it. She was their recognized leader, and when she piped they danced.

The present dance was a slow and sensuous measure

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touched by little "thrills" of godliness. It seemed delightful to dine to slow music, and wear only violets, and have fish dinners every Friday.

Added to this was the advent of a new evangelist with a face like the Infant Jesus, and what Teddy Adair had called "amarynthine eyes." No one was quite sure what that meant, or if it expressed colour or shape. But they all gazed into David's eyes and thought them exquisite. Violet and black? Quite extraordinarily appropriate to the season and their mood!

There was no card-playing to-night, only some very excellent music. And Rinaldi sang divinely. David listened like one entranced, quite unaware that his own face and his rapt expression were the object of Lady Pamela's jealous regard. What a young saint he looked! Would he never come down to earth and see that it held joys as divine, dreams as exquisite, as those of his soul? She wondered if here and there *were* mortals who brought to the world minds and characters that were never formed of earth's mould; that did really seem to bear the stamp of Heaven and of purity?

"Ah!" she thought. "If one could but live in the ignorance that is happiness, instead of craving for the enlightenment that is death!"

And her memory went back a long way to a time when she, too, had been ignorant and innocent; when she had not believed that to sell oneself for wealth was a wise and laudable proceeding. And now—the irony of it all.

A perpetual striving to find something new; do something startling; stifle the ears of the soul and deaden the voice of regret. She looked back on a career of deceit and brutal abasement and foolish intrigues; of endless hours of trivial amusements cut out on one pattern, followed season after season. Oh, how sick she felt of this life—to-night! To-night, when a face like a young saint's met her eyes; and the rich and glorious strains of a divine melody seemed to call out something finer than her own nature to meet it.

Just for a few moments she detained him as the evening passed.

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"I can see you didn't enjoy it," she said hurriedly. "You must come and see me quietly, when there's no crowd and we can really talk. I'm generally in at five o'clock. Will you come on—Monday? Not Mr. Ormistoun. I don't want him; just yourself. Say yes."

"Yes," said David. "I should like to talk with you alone, without all these people to distract and interrupt us."

"You dear boy!" she said softly, and then laughed and pressed his hand. "Oh! why are you a saint?" she added pettishly.

David found no answer ready. She always seemed to confuse his thoughts. But she did not expect one evidently; she had floated off to another set of people. A violet cloud, exquisite, unreal, intangible; and yet—only woman to her finger tips, had he but known.

David was trying to disentangle the experiences already his from the curious twists and knots of doctrinal intricacies that he had found in London.

There had been Ormistoun's sermon and conversations; the opinions of the old Romish priest; the queer, jangling tune of Christian Science. And all these things meant Religion; the worship of God; the service of the Church.

What strange things had been said to him to-night! What odd questions he had been asked! Did they really mean what they said, these gay, rattling, restless people, whose manners and mode of speech were like an unfamiliar language to him?

"About this Christian Science," he said to Ormistoun. "I wish you would explain it a little. I couldn't help being interested in that discussion to-night. I suppose I am fearfully out of touch with everything that goes for advanced thought in London?"

"That is to be expected," said Ormistoun. "People who see visions and dream dreams, and have lived between two worlds, as you have done, find it difficult to adjust their faculties to commonplace life. And with all this glitter and show which seem to you so surprising, the life of society is very commonplace. The pursuit of pleasure must be that. Of course, here and there one comes across a little knot of intellectual people, artistic people, political

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people. But they move in formal cliques; are set hard and fast in special grooves. The other set—the amusing, wasteful, extravagant set—only think of enjoying themselves at any cost. However, you want to hear something about Christian Science?”

He went over to the bookcase and brought out a thick volume in a dark, plain binding. He handed it to David, who took it eagerly. On the cover was impressed a gilt circle, centred by a crown through which a cross was thrust. Through the inner side of the circle ran a text in gilt lettering: “Heal the sick. Raise the dead. Cleanse the lepers. Cast out devils.”

“A large order, isn’t it?” smiled Ormistoun. “But the Founder is built on large lines. American lines. Bombast, self-delusion, enormous energy, and unbounded assurance. She has gone so far as to claim for herself that she is *the chosen successor to and equal of Christ*. She assumes the title of ‘Pastor Emeritus, of the First Church of Christ, Scientist,’ whatever *that* may mean; and she calls that book in your hands ‘A Key to the Scriptures.’ Now, every sensible man or woman knows that no such ‘key’ is possible unless the locksmith has a thorough acquaintance with the mechanism of his lock. She does not say the *translation* of the Scriptures. Yet, without a knowledge of Hebrew and Greek, no one has a right to assume they know the real Bible at all. Think of the years Strauss gave to his *Leben Jesu*; think of the patient labour of the Fathers and the Councils, and all the authors ancient and modern, on Christian evidence. Why, one man of my own college has given twenty years’ research to the bare testimony of *one* section of the Gospels. One. And an hysterical, eccentric woman makes a dash straight off into the most momentous and most puzzling of life’s many mysteries, proclaims it a divine revelation, and copyrights it at a minimum price of twelve and sixpence! She takes for granted things that have never been *proved*, and manufactures a so-called religion whose very essence is selfishness: the desire to get rid of physical ills that are inseparable from a physical existence. It was because she was herself a chronic invalid that she first attached herself to a mental healer. First she acclaimed *him* as little

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short of divine; then she spent months in copying his manuscripts, which she is said to have appropriated after his death; finally, after much juggling with facts and dates, she claims this 'Divine Revelation' for herself."

David was mechanically glancing at pages and paragraphs.

"She seems to assert there is no such thing as sickness or pain?"

"Exactly. On the logical basis of denying existence so as to make it *non-existent*, just as she professes to take her science from the Scriptures, yet omits to state that a certain portion of Scripture is largely concerned with healing, and commands honour to a physician, for 'the Lord has created him.'"

"Luke is called 'the beloved physician' by St. Paul," observed David. "And he was one of the four evangelists."

"True. But Christian Scientists always gloss over facts that don't fit their creed. They secure followers for two very excellent reasons. There are few things a sick person won't do if you assure him of a cure. Christian Science goes one better. It declares there is *nothing to be cured*; that disease and pain are imaginary. Well, if you can believe *that* you can believe anything. The second appeal is even more subtle. It is the appeal to woman. Two officials must conduct a Science service; a woman and a man. Man is not to have it all his own way. Women can also become Science preachers and healers, and try their prentice hands at mental and physical cures. Women may get up and testify and speechify to their hearts' content before an admiring assemblage of the Faithful. And, as most women are illogical and the others emotional, this occupation suits them exactly."

"But," said David, "if there was nothing in it, how could it have taken such a hold of the public mind?"

"Of the Transatlantic mind, you mean. An American would believe anything, especially if there's dollars in it. There have been millions of dollars in this. And the converts are mostly rich, hysterical *malades imaginaires*. Half our bodily ailments are brought about by over-feeding, careless living, or neglect of common hygienic

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rules. Apply Christian Science to these and you may reckon on a cure. But any other mental treatment would do as well; only it mightn't appeal so strongly to vanity. That's where the Testimony comes in. It's a *sine qua non* of the treatment. The moment you feel better you must stand up before a church full of people and declare Science has cured you, and give thanks to Mrs. Eddy! I'm not, as you know, David, a very orthodox person, but I do draw the line at ranking a crack-brained American faddist with God Almighty!"

David had ceased turning over the pages of the book. The first sentence of the Preface had caught his eye:

"To those leaning on the sustaining Infinite, to-day is big with blessings."

Then, lower on the page:

"The Time for Thinkers has come. Truth, independent of doctrines and time-honoured systems, knocks at the portals of Humanity."

Truth—again?

He looked up. "All you say makes me rather curious to read this book. May I take it to my room?"

"Certainly," said Ormistoun; "and I hope you'll be able to construe its meaning. Mrs. Eddy calls it a 'key' to the Scriptures; but she might with advantage have supplied readers with a key to itself."

David put the book on a table by his side. "I am beginning to wonder," he said, "how so many faiths and creeds sprang into existence. I wonder even more what will be their result; how man will defend sophistry and false teaching when he stands at the bar of the Great Judge?"

"What if there should be no Bar, and no Judge?"

"God says He will bring every secret thing into judgment, whether it be good or evil."

"So He will; so He does. Every day of our lives we have to render an account. Are we not conscious of every sin, every weakness? We know to what we may yield and what we must reject. The larger our consciousness, the fuller our knowledge of God. The reality of our being means the reality of His; oneness, undividedness, ultimate unity. The doctrine of evolution is closely allied to what

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we term religious faith. It is at once the most reasonable and satisfactory account of human existence. A giving forth; a slow progress; growth to a higher height; a greater perfection of thought and life."

"Then do you say the Biblical account of Creation and man's origin is incorrect?"

Ormistoun shook the ashes out of his pipe and replaced it in the rack.

"To a babe in Theology like yourself, David, it is difficult to explain these matters. You see, Science is ever at war with myths. It's not enough to say a thing *is*. We want to know *why* it is, and *what* it is. The position of the Atheist is Denial; of the Agnostic, Unknowableness. Order seems to exist everywhere in Nature. Why, then, in one of the most vital evolutions of Nature do impossibilities meet us and deny our right to explanation?"

"I have never found it impossible to believe that God made the world as the Bible says. If He is omnipotent He can do anything."

"Granted. But in that case there was no necessity to limit His powers of organization to seven days. The world could as easily have sprung into existence ready-made as by a period of sustained creative power. The fact that it required seven *days*, or *periods*, of time, seems to imply either that the historian's brain was incapable of representing it as entirely miraculous, or else that he has given an imperfect account of the event. Now, natural law simplifies all this. It means that, as far as human knowledge goes, certain events have always followed certain events. Given an existing condition, it is quite provable that it enforces or is followed up by another condition. These are proven facts, as sure as that night follows day, and independent of any belief in a Deity, personal or Spiritual."

"Then you agree with Darwin? Everything was evolved slowly and continuously—species from species?"

"I agree with him that thousands of processes have gone to the making of man. He did not spring from a heap of red earth. (You'll find Mrs. Eddy lucidly gives *that* definition; having read somewhere that *Adamah* signifies in Hebrew the red colour of the ground.) He is the

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conclusion of a myriad of analogous processes, brought about by and in harmony with natural laws. Nature standing once and for all as both creator and destroyer, for ever weaving new patterns of life and for ever destroying them; bringing some to greater perfection than others, as if to prove the merits of survival. All this argues a high idea of Intelligence. We can but suppose that the force behind Nature is greater than Nature, or else that Nature has been translated into one word, 'God.'"

"So far you only suggest evolution as a scheme—a chain of many links; but you can't say *how* such things came about. The first Great Thought must also mean the first Great Power. That—I defy any man or any scientist to explain!"

"I am not attempting to explain it," said Ormistoun. "The day will come when, like myself, you will begin to question the Cause of Things. The rise and fall of Races; the perpetuation of one form of life more than another; the rage for destruction and the passions of cruelty and vengeance. And through them all the silver thread of religious faith; exemplified in a thousand different forms and shapes, changed yet never broken; the spiritual environment for the soul as the natural environment for the body, both working harmoniously for a purpose we are not yet wise enough to explain."

"It seems to me," said David bitterly, "that you could only have asked me to preach these Lenten sermons as an amusement for yourself and your congregation. What is the use of my telling them what the Bible and my soul have taught me, when everything you say disproves the reality of either?"

"I have not disproved the reality of your soul. That—is a conviction my arguments dare not touch. It is an Intelligence higher than your body; the link between yourself and the yet higher Intelligence we have called God. Man has sought to explain Him and sought in vain. Why? Because man is still on too low a plane of spiritual development to comprehend his ultimate conclusion."

David rose and pushed aside his chair.

"Ah, Mr. Ormistoun," he said, "you are too clever for me to follow where you lead. But answer me one thing.

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Does this knowledge, or belief, or deduction, whatever you call it, *satisfy* you ? ”

There was a long silence.

Then Ormistoun looked up at the anxious, questioning eyes. “Candidly, David,” he said, “it does *not*. I would rather believe as you do in the Seven days, the Apple, and the Flood, and all the other impossibilities that fence round miracle from reason. But I know I never could believe in them again, and so I must e’en go on my own way and work out my own evolution. And now a counter question. Does that faith, and those dreams, and that uncritical attitude towards Divine things, *satisfy you* ? ”

“They did,” said David brokenly. “They did—till I met you ! ”

XVII

"WHAT am I to do? What am I to believe? God help me!"

It was an exceeding bitter cry: the cry of a drowning soul; the prayer of a breaking faith. It was the culmination of the spiritual conflict that had begun in the garden of Trebarwick and continued for four long, bewildering weeks.

For four Sundays had David stood up in that sensuous atmosphere of St. Ninian's, and preached of the simple truths of Christianity as he believed them; as his first teachers had believed them; as in visions of the night and dreams of beatific beauty he had seen them; as his Call from the mysterious Mount and his vision of the mighty Angel had sanctified them.

And now, suddenly, without warning, the ground had broken from beneath his feet.

He felt everything crumbling around him; he heard above all a mocking voice, a silvery laugh—"dear Saint David, *do* step off your pedestal and treat me like a woman, not an angel; because, after all, I'm not *that*—nor is any woman."

Like a rushing torrent, there swept over him a hundred memories of whispers, provocations, glances; of some subtle spell working in the dusk of a firelit boudoir where he and she sat alone and talked of deep things, serious things; he, all unconscious of the half-divine, half-infamous web that was being woven around him day by day. How often had he been there, in that flower-scented, exquisite room, furnished to suit the taste of its mistress; altered, for those weeks of "retreat," as she named them, to something half conventual. A table which she called her altar stood in one corner, draped in violet velvet, covered with lilies. On it stood a tall ivory

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crucifix, the figure exquisitely carved, and ever present to David's mind as he reflected on the talks and scenes over which it had presided. What a mockery they seemed now!

He was alone in his room, kneeling by the bed where he had flung himself in a sudden abandonment of grief after his return from Grosvenor Street. And the cry which had burst from his agonized heart was that of his first recognition of temptation. For this interview had not been as others.

On looking back at those swiftly passing weeks David wondered how that little habit of dropping in for tea in that seductive "oratory" had become almost a part of his life. Sometimes other people were there. On two occasions he had been specially asked to talk over Christian Science. But lately they had been always alone—he and Lady Pamela. And what a wondrous, magical hour it could become—that hour she kept only for him, so she said. Subtly she would draw him on from subject to subject, each touched with the sensuous spirituality that was her present mood; fencing with danger, playing with suggestion; armed at all points where her victim was defenceless. But at last she grew impatient. Saintship was all very well, and it was amusing to see the boy's face pale, and his eyes glow, and his hand tremble as she looked at, or smiled at, or touched him. But why would he never say anything?

Then, on this last day, she had led the conversation to Rome and the rites and ceremonies of Rome. She spoke of the power of its priesthood as contrasted with the insignificance of the English cleric. She told him stories of the Confessional, its secrets and its influence; of what Italian women and French women had confided to her in rare moments of confidence. And she had murmured softly of the relief it might be to throw the burden of one's sins and temptations aside, and by confessing lessen their power or atone for their influence.

He had not liked the idea. Even in that book about the young priest, confession had been proved as very dangerous. There was something disgusting to a clean young mind in the suggestiveness and impurity of a priest's

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questioning. Nothing was sacred from such questioning; boyhood, maidenhood; the sweet intimacies of the family; the relations between husband and wife, mother and child. It seemed to David's Puritan mind a very invention of the devil. A masterpiece of ingenuity, certainly, for the whole machinery of Romish supremacy could be worked by this means. Nothing was safe from espionage; nothing too sacred for prying eyes, or sensual suggestion. Truly, to make one human mind supreme over another was the most subtle flattery that could be offered a priest! It placed him in the position of God for the time being, seeing that the poor, indiscriminating penitent might not have access to Divine Grace save through this earthly medium.

So David had refused to "play" at Confession and said some very hard and bitter things about it. And even while he said them a sudden longing had seized him for the breath of the sea; for some wide, clear space where he and his soul might again be alone with God.

Intimacy is a species of education, and the friendship of Stephen Ormistoun and the fascinations of Lady Pamela had taught David more of life in these brief weeks than years of his Cornish village could have done. Yet he had been unconscious of danger; he had still believed his faith was firm and his honour unsullied; he had tried hard to remember that this lovely, dazzling syren was a married woman; that even that semi-sensuous oratory was but a room in her husband's house: all its sumptuous decorations and all her luxurious surroundings paid for by his money. True, she never spoke of him, and David rarely met him; but he never forgot she was Reuben Leaffe's wife—a particularly irritating fact to Lady Pamela.

Not that she was absolutely corrupt: but her nature had no sure rule of guidance, and marital obligations, as concerned with marriages of convenience, were of the very flimsiest description. She had been strangely fascinated by that spiritual beauty of David. It had been a refreshing novelty to penetrate his transparent soul and exploit the reality of his religious ardour. When she discovered

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it was real—to him the most vital thing in life—she was conscious of a little shame, as well as of petulant anger. She wondered why Stephen Ormistoun had brought him here? Why she herself had “taken him up” so ardently? It seemed impossible to make him speak of his feelings, let her flatter and seduce ever so cunningly. The very youth which she deemed so plastic steeled him against self-betrayal. He had been to other houses besides hers; had seen other women sinking virtue and intelligence in the slough of secret passions and ignoble amours. Ormistoun had not spared society’s morals, nor David’s innocence. Why should he? he asked himself. There were things that all men must know. And the hair shirt of ecclesiasticism was no surer safeguard than the self-erected barriers of so-called “honour”; the honour of men of the world and women of the world.

But the fruit of all this teaching and seduction was bitter in the eating. David had at last come home from a scene in that flower-scented boudoir with his whole soul sick with shame. There had been first that talk over the Romish Sacrament of Confession; his plainly evinced repugnance at the idea, and her playful combating of it. And then suddenly the game seemed to become earnest. She had sunk on her knees in the firelit dusk and told him he was the priest of her heart and the keeper of her soul, and that she must and would tell him their secrets.

Before he could stop her a wild torrent of speech had poured forth. She painted her lonely, poverty-cursed girlhood; her beauty that had made her only a thing to barter in the marriage market. How she had been sold to Reuben Leaffe; how starved and empty was her life, despite its surface brilliance; how she had sought spiritual comfort and found none until he had come like an angel of light, bearing that wonderful message.

Then the temptation grew more subtle. She spoke of love—spiritually pure, soul-comforting: Heaven’s gift to the sick and weary ones of earth. She painted its joys, its confidences, its concessions; she filled the secret chambers of his heart with subtle unrest and incredible meanings. Her arms were flung over his knees, her lovely

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head bent on them; there came broken sobs, strange whispers. A medley of ungoverned feeling swept him off his feet. In that moment the world and life and all therein meant nothing but just that kneeling woman, and his own wild terror, and the first thrill and ecstasy of waking passions.

Then, in shamed confusion, he had tried to raise her from that attitude of abandonment. She had lifted her face, and in those golden eyes was something compelling, irresistible. He would have been more than mortal to resist; less than saint he knew himself. The lovely face sank on his breast; the wooing lips met his, and innocence and sin, each guardian of a soul, fought no longer.

The victory was the woman's; the shame the man's.

How long ago since those eyes had tempted him—that kiss sealed his fate?

David knelt there in an agony of abandonment. "What am I to do? God help me!"

But why should God help him? He had run almost wilfully into temptation. He could see that now. Now, when he looked back on all these days and weeks of subtle flattery, of blind obedience to an imperious will: a will far stronger than his own, that had set itself to conquer, and now triumphed in the baseness of success.

He had left her with an abruptness almost rude. How he had reached Westminster and this room he could not tell. Certainly volition had been a blind impulse. His dazed brain had acted in purely mechanical fashion.

All he knew was that he had flung himself down on his knees, abased and humiliated, feeling as if every landmark of his past life had been swept away by a tempestuous sea. Life suddenly flashed before him in new colours—a mockery, a weariness, a lie; a huge devouring, monstrous lie that changed the soul's pure coinage into dice and played with them as gamblers play.

There are moments in a man's life when all the hidden forces he has ignored seem to conspire for his destruction. David had dwelt in serene aloofness; had never pictured human love as dominating the soul to the exclusion of its high calling. Now, it seemed to him that he was looking

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down into some pitiless Inferno; for Religion and Sorrow might go hand in hand, but never Religion and Sin.

And he had sinned—grievously, even if pardonably.

What to do? How to pray? How to face the morrow and all the endless morrows that meant the passage of Time? Time the gateway to Eternity.

He could not pray. It seemed a mockery. Always and ever between him and his words came that witching face, those curved, sweet lips whose touch had turned him faint with longing.

Between him and God she came, defiling his worship as she had defiled his soul; standing with outstretched arms and passionate eyes—a vivid image, a mad temptation; the sorceress, ever young and ever old, who has ruled man's destiny more surely than any living force.

He rose from his knees. It was almost dark. In a few moments the gong would sound and Ormistoun would be waiting for him for dinner. Oh, the bathos and mockery of life!

Then suddenly he resolved to leave here—to leave at once; forego the next two Sundays; tear himself from temptation. He must not see her again; he dare not. Surely she would regret as deeply as he did that momentary aberration of the senses; those kisses, whispers: mad suggestions of impossibilities!

Then, like the touch of a cool hand to fevered brow, came a thought. Ruth. Ruth—pure, good little Ruth; Ruth, to whom he owed any human love that his heart might know; Ruth, whom he had kissed by the sea in the golden twilight and promised to wed in time to come. She would save him; she would calm him; she would cast out this evil spirit that had taken possession of him. With her this fever of the senses would abate, and life once more become the peaceful, holy thing it had seemed till just four weeks ago.

Four little weeks—a small space to measure a fall so great. Yet had not Adam fallen in a moment at the tempting of a woman?

Was it her beauty that had tempted *him*? That insidious, subtle, deadly thing which saps the strength of a man and leaves him a prey to unholy desires? Was that

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the meaning of the Apple—the Forbidden Fruit? If so, no wonder he was accursed and all his race because of him. The love of the flesh—that was what it meant. A brief beauty and glory and madness, and then—Hell.

The hell of one's own making; the self-torments for ever gnawing at one's heart; the knowledge of good and evil that only comes when evil is known. He recognized it at last. He wondered what he should tell Ormistoun? How get away from here?

That he was determined to do. He would not see her again; he would not risk another such scene. He would go back to his beloved sea and the wild moors, and the simple homely life and the old simple teaching. But could he teach? Dare he?

The gong sounded softly as he reached that point of perturbation.

He started, and remembered he had not dressed. He turned on the light and bathed his flushed, tear-stained face in cool water, and hoped that Ormistoun would not notice much amiss. But Ormistoun did—at once. The traces were too evident to be overlooked.

Something had happened. Well, he had been expecting it.

The moth had fluttered too near the candle; he had been badly scorched, poor foolish thing! But it was not his way to force confidence. He kept the conversation in external channels. He felt that David would explain things sooner or later. Meanwhile he pretended not to notice the rejected food, the shaking hand; the absent replies to his questions.

When dinner was over they went to the study as usual. The evenings were still chilly enough to excuse a fire, and Ormistoun had a cat-like affection for warmth and comfort.

"It's a treat to have an evening to ourselves," he said as he lit his pipe. "There's a meeting on at Exeter Hall, if you'd care to go?"

"Oh, no," said David wearily. "I'm glad to be in for once. I'm getting tired of so much excitement."

There was a long silence, while Ormistoun smoked in thoughtful content, and David cast about in his mind for some seemingly rational excuse to get away the next day.

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"I see you're uncomfortable," said Ormistoun quietly. "What's happened?"

David rose and stood leaning against the mantelshelf, his eyes on the deep glow of the coals. "I want you to let me off the next two Sundays," he said huskily.

"Oh!" said Ormistoun. "I suppose you have a reason?"

"A great many. I—I can't speak as I used to speak. I don't feel as I used to feel. Something—has gone from me, Ormistoun," he added brokenly. "You may think me a fool—doubtless you do. But unless I get back to the same point of Faith from which I started, it's not possible to speak of it to others."

Ormistoun was conscious of a little stab of regret. He had been very cruel. He had taken this young dreamer from the sea and the moors and the simple life of Nature, had stripped him bit by bit of his faith, his confidence, his spirituality, and given him but crude facts and scientific problems in their place.

And a worse thing, too, he had done: exposed him to the subtle temptings of a woman whom he knew to be conscienceless and merciless where her passions or her vanity were concerned. He had not even warned the boy. For, after all, he was but a boy; a tyro in worldly matters in comparison with himself.

"Ah, David," he said, "I feared an upset of some sort. Was it Christian Science?"

"No! At least, that means *something*, though you say it's bad theology and worse science. I don't feel equal to discussing my reasons. I only beg you to believe I wouldn't ask this—if it wasn't necessary."

"This is Friday," observed Ormistoun. "You give me short notice to provide a substitute."

"I am sorry," faltered David. "But I couldn't preach there again. Perhaps I never shall preach again—anywhere."

"Oh, yes, you will. This is only a mental phase. We all go through such things at one time or another. It is one of the ironies of our calling. The life of the soul is progressive and changeable, like that of the body. Also it has its periods of sickness and depression. You are suffer-

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ing from such an attack and are correspondingly depressed. However, I could not possibly force you to stay here against your will, still less to preach at St. Ninian's. I suppose you cannot—particularize your reasons? or cannot help you?"

David shook his head.

"No one can help me," he said bitterly. "I am out in the wilderness, driven hither and thither like a wandering spirit. I shall have to get quite away—by myself, and piece up the fragments that remain, if they are worth it; fight out the truth of my old images of thought; see Christ as I have been used to see Him, or else——"

His lip quivered suddenly. He was face to face with the saddest and strangest tragedy that human souls can know—that of lost faith. And added to this was the memory of human passion that had met him like a lion in the way; that demanded life or liberty.

In the anguish of the sudden struggle he was conscious of the womanish weakness of tears. He kept his eyes averted, but they escaped and rolled down the smooth, boyish cheek, scalding it with the heart's fire.

Ormistoun was touched to pity. This was more than he had meant. He had only proposed a gradual enlightenment founded on solid facts. He had not calculated on the sudden earthquake that had shattered preconceived beliefs, and left this young soul naked and desolate.

"Couldn't you trust me enough to tell me how you feel?" he said at last. "I might help you."

David shook his head.

"In any case, I am sure that when you grow calmer, when you study facts instead of accepting fallacies, you will regain your peace of mind. The truth of Christian evidence does not do away with the reality of Christ. He lived. He fulfilled a mission. He died. Other great and good teachers have done the same. Hundreds suffered more than He did; a longer martyrdom, crueller pain. It is all part of the great scheme, as we are part of it. It seems painful to you because you have been nurtured in the nursery fiction of the Bible—the purely traditional. But in time you will see for yourself that it is impossible and unreal. It will not make life less valuable, or a

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Future state less sure. It will only place them on a more convincing basis. Evidence is surely preferable to fallacy?"

"I cannot go through all that again—and now," said David. "I only know I came here a believer, and I don't know what I have become. An infidel; a traitor; one not worthy to take up Christ's service! There is nothing to do but fight it out for myself. In the wilderness, with the devil perhaps, even as my Master was driven forth! But go I must—and at once."

"Are you sure there is nothing else that is driving you into the wilderness? Only these spiritual doubts?"

A wave of scarlet swept the pallor from David's face. His eyes flashed indignant denial; he could not betray her; could not tell of this afternoon's mad scene—never to living soul!

"What else should there be?" he exclaimed. "Are they not enough? Can't you see that I can never be the same again? Never feel as I felt when I accepted your invitation to preach here as I had been used to preach to my faithful Cornish folk?"

"And what will you do about them?" asked Ormistoun.

"That is hard to say. I must go to the Squire and tell him that it's been a failure. I hadn't strength enough to stand up against you as I used to stand up against him. Everything seems altered. I—most of all."

"I suppose I ought to say I'm sorry, but it seems so inevitable. I believe no preacher of the Gospel, whatever his faith, or sect, or denomination, has escaped such an ordeal as you are passing through. At least, if he *has*, I wouldn't give much for his conscience. I—myself—but we won't go over that. Each of us who *thinks*, David, carries in his heart a hell of his own making. Sometimes God pities us and drags us forth; but oftener He lets us alone. Still, all life is His, and He who cast us into this world will assuredly know what to do with us when we leave it. I and you, and thousands, millions like ourselves may find Death a Lantern of Light, and an Angel of Darkness."

"I would! it were death I had to face," cried David with sudden passion. "But it is life that is so hard! The

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going on; the living on; and around one only doubt and disloyalty and shame!"

"You are too hard on yourself."

"Not half hard enough. Ah, let me go! Let me fight this out alone! Some day—who knows?—we may meet again, and then—then——"

His voice broke. How could he hope for any good or any peace of mind? He was doubly dishonoured; spiritually and physically. He had been tried and found wanting. He had been false as Peter; as great a traitor as Judas. He had failed his Master at the first tempting of evil; had betrayed Him, if not for talents of silver, for the false gold of an impure passion—at the subtle reasoning of an unfaithful priest.

The suddenness of his fall, the meanness of his betrayal, shamed him to the depths of his soul. He realized a crisis in his self-chosen career.

If not the end, this was a check, a challenge. It must be met; it must be answered.

Half-dazed, like one in a dream, he held out his hand to Ormistoun. "You have been very kind to me," he said, "and very cruel. But I forgive you."

But Stephen Ormistoun, sitting on alone while the night grew late and the hours slipped by unheeded, went over the events of these four weeks, and knew it would not be easy to forgive himself.

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PART III

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LADY PAMELA had just returned from morning service at St. Ninian's. She was in a state of feverish excitement and of furious rage.

After the sermon Stephen Ormistoun had announced that the evening lecture would be delivered by a stranger. He gave no explanation of the alteration; merely mentioned it, and then left the pulpit for his usual place at the altar while the choir sang an "Agnus Dei" as the offertory was being collected.

Lady Silchester was with her niece, and a dozen of her most intimate friends were near at hand. Lady Pamela had shown commendable presence of mind in evincing no surprise and no emotion. There is no school like that of the world for training one's nerves. But at the conclusion of the singing she hastened to the vestry on the pretence of asking Stephen Ormistoun to lunch. She gave no such invitation; she merely shook hands and said quietly: "Why this alteration?"

Stephen did not pretend to misunderstand. "Mr. Hermon refuses to preach here any more," he said.

"I thought he was engaged for the six services? Surely you could have kept him?"

He smiled coldly. "Dear Lady Pamela, you can drag a horse to the water, but you can't make him drink unless he wishes to do so. What is the use of forced submission? David's views have altered with his experiences. I have no further use for him."

Her eyes flashed. "No—further use! Then do you mean to say he is no longer with you?"

"He left London yesterday."

"Where has he gone?" she demanded fiercely.

"Back to Cornwall, I believe. I am sure he would be immensely flattered by your interest."

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"You're a beast, Stephen!" she flashed out. "You've done something, said something, to occasion such an upset! Why, on Friday evening——"

"He *was* with you on Friday evening? I feared as much."

"Feared?"

"You are rather a dangerous 'child's guide to knowledge,' Lady Pamela. And a man, be he ever so young, or ever such a saint, is not always the better for such an instructress!"

She flushed angrily. "You are quite abominable to-day! I believe you are at the bottom of this. You sent him away because he was becoming a bigger 'draw' than yourself. How are you going to explain to people to-night? They'll be like raging lions seeking whom they may devour, when they find——"

He smiled. "Oh, I don't think so! The man I have engaged is very attractive. And Mrs. Potiphar Brue, the celebrated actress, is going to recite to slow music afterwards. Then next Sunday——"

But Lady Pamela was at the door. "I don't care what you have or what you do! I shan't come here again!"

He raised his eyebrows. "Won't that look rather—remarkable, after such close attendance for these past four weeks?"

"I don't care what it looks! I'm not accountable to any one for my actions."

She went away to the waiting motor. She made a tour of the Park and then drove home. A crowd of people were coming to lunch, as usual, and Lady Pamela knew she would have to answer questions as to the alteration at St. Ninian's, and be asked if she knew why the Boy Evangelist had departed so suddenly. She must school herself for such inquiries, and show nothing but casual indifference to the subject of them. But all the time her mind kept returning like an uncoiled spring to the point from whence it had been released.

Why had he gone? Gone without a word or sign, while yet that impassioned scene of the boudoir-oratory thrilled her with its sensuous memories.

Lady Pamela was an erratic, impulsive woman, coveting

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every experience of life, and coveting life as valuable merely for such experiences. As yet she had been content with skimming the cream of emotions, not absolutely yielding to them. She had plunged recklessly into intimacies and friendships, but had plainly shown that such things were for her mere pastimes, and that her preferences were not to be taken too seriously. In fact, she was that dangerous species of coquette who is as fire to her slave's emotion and ice to her own. For long she had assumed all the rights and liberties of leadership; selected her amusements and her followers as the fancy pleased her.

"If I think a man or a woman worth knowing," she would say, "I let them know I think it."

She had pursued this course with David. But for once her tactics had been overthrown by simple untrained methods. Not only that, but she had had to woo *him*. The first novelty of the situation over, she found herself a prey to hitherto unsuspected feelings; eagerness, curiosity, the romantic passion of a girl struggling with the prudences of worldly knowledge.

Flashes of new consciousness of her own nature passed through her brain. She found herself intensely interesting; she had a longing for quiet gardens and moonlight, and the song of nightingales and the sensuous passion of erotic poetry. She had spent hours picturing that next meeting, half longing, half afraid of it, and lo! she found herself face to face with desertion.

Was he afraid? Had he turned coward? Could he not even have written a word of farewell? A sudden sense of rage at such stupidity swept over her. After all, it was only men of the world who knew how to conduct a love affair. These crude dreamers——

But even at the word she saw before her the noble beauty of that young face, the deep, dark wonder of those violet eyes; and her heart seemed to melt within her breast and all her life swam out on a sea of longing and desire.

She played her part at the luncheon table as well as ever; talked the usual brilliant nonsense expected of her; chaffed the ever-faithful Teddy; told every one she was counting the days before Sunday Bridge could be again permitted;

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and then hinted at a new attraction put forth at St. Ninian's—the musical recitations of Mrs. Potiphar Brue.

There was, as she expected, a sudden mention of David's name; a host of inquiries. With a shrug of graceful shoulders she insinuated that he had been recalled to his own parish. Rumours of St. Ninian's unorthodox services had reached his pastors and masters, and for fear of contaminating their ewe lamb he had been snatched back into the fold.

There were a few comments, a word of regret, because David had really been a preacher "to the manner born," though with an uncomfortable knack of making people feel. But in Lent that was excusable.

Then somehow the talk drifted to worldly topics; to Mrs. Potiphar Brue and her late visit to Paris in company with a peculiarly idiotic specimen of the young aristocracy. She was, of course, old enough to be his grandmother; but, then, she wasn't. And her serpentine graces and strange eyes were still in demand by a limited section of vacuous youth with more money than brains. From Mrs. Potiphar to the stage, and the new after-Lent productions, was an easy transition. Then Lady Pamela had pushed aside her glasses and put her elbows on the table, and smoked a cigarette and let the ball roll as it would.

But after luncheon she had had a very *mauvais quart d'heure* indeed; almost the worst since her marriage night. She had wanted to rage and shriek and tear her hair, and all the time knew she must submit; wait on his next action; live her usual life; go on with the parlour tricks she knew as second nature. She felt a sudden loathing of them all. Life looked a great emptiness: black and void, yet charged with unimaginable horrors—shapes, images, threats that one recklessly challenged and might not always defy. How many men and women she had known had made shipwreck of their lives for some craze or passion that suddenly seemed worth all else.

And was it? Had it ever proved so? She did not believe it.

Human beings were more or less like children chasing butterflies. It was pursuit that held interest, not capture.

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CALVARY

Capture meant only a handful of dust, a bruised, broken shape crushed in a hot hand. And when they grew older the butterflies took another form. They were pursued as eagerly; but the result was still the same—satiety, weariness, dust.

She threw herself down amongst the cushions of her couch. She shut her burning eyes and tried to recall those hours spent there with her "young Saint," as she had called him.

How earnest he had been and how eloquent! What a difference between him and every previously favoured sharer of her solitude! That had been the attraction. The incentive to interpose herself between his spiritual dreams and his earthly ambitions; to drag him down from his pedestal and make him worship at her feet. There are more women ambitious of playing Circe to their lovers than guardian angel.

For Lady Pamela there was nothing to be gained by such a conquest; no social prestige; no feminine envy. But she had planned in her own mind a little religious comedy with her private oratory as its stage; the subjugation of spiritual innocence as its plot. Probably she would have tired of it in a month, but she had not been given the chance.

That maddened her. The first slight, the first rebuff, is to a woman's vanity what a blow is to a man. Besides, she was suddenly confronted with a certain purposelessness in life. Some interest had gone, and no other was ready to take its place. Usually she had taken care to provide that. But this catastrophe was unexpected as well as humiliating.

Then she began to seek for outside causes. Had Stephen Ormistoun warned David, or had David been drawn into a confession of his weakness? Either case would have produced serious results in a mind so absolutely innocent and unworldly. If so, Stephen must not see that she cared. It had been foolish to go to the vestry that morning; more foolish still that threat of not attending St. Ninian's. How could she have so lost her head as to say such a thing! Well, she must prove it was but a momentary fit of petulance born of pique.

CALVARY

Above all, she must hide this secret from her aunt. Already Lady Silchester had uttered hints as to the unwisdom of those many visits and the boudoir seclusion. She was not more malicious than most elderly women who have few interests left in life, but her abnormal curiosity helped her to scent out scandals very quickly. Her imagination always outran the truth and sometimes superseded it.

Again Lady Pamela thought of intervening days of silence ere explanation was possible. For some explanation was imperative. Things had gone too far for such a sudden break. She would write. But again difficulty faced her. She had no idea of David's address, and Cornwall was a rather vague direction. But—was there not a certain Squire, owner of a manor and estates? She remembered her aunt speaking about him. Possibly she would know the name. And then a guardedly expressed missive might be ventured upon. Of course, Stephen Ormistoun knew, but she was not going to ask Stephen Ormistoun. She would just seem to drop the subject as if it had lost all interest.

She rose from her couch at last and went to her writing-table. In doing so she had to pass the velvet-draped altar on which stood the ivory crucifix.

In a sudden fit of fury she seized the flowers and trampled them under her feet. She dragged the velvet draperies roughly from their place, bringing down the silver candlesticks and books and crucifix in pell-mell confusion.

She felt that she hated this travesty of sanctity; emblems of a mood that had passed away as hundreds of other moods and fancies had passed. As she glanced down at the havoc she had made, there came a knock at the door. For one swift moment her heart seemed to stop beating. Could it be—

Then a voice spoke. "It is I, Pamela. May I come in?"

Her husband's voice!

She tried to calm herself, to pretend it meant nothing, but for once she felt afraid. With amazing self-control she cried out: "Of course! The door's open."

Reuben Leafie came in and stood looking at the *débris* over which she was stooping.

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"I am altering my oratory, you see," she said. "Lent is so nearly over that I have no further use for it!"

Pretence and acting were excellent.

The sullen, heavy-looking, black-browed man stood just within the doorway, and watched her.

"No further use!" he echoed. "Is that because your young priest has left you?"

The colour rushed to her face. "What do you mean?" she demanded sharply.

He gave a short, unpleasant laugh. "Oh, nothing, of course! I am not to see, to hear, to know. But I do see—sometimes."

He bent down and picked up the ivory crucifix. "What liars you are, you Christian women! *This*—set up here where your lusts and your passions and your immoralities are let loose to the tune of the moment!"

"How dare you speak like that! How dare you!" she stammered breathlessly.

"I dare many things when it suits me. It suits me to come here now and give you a warning. I like that boy with the beautiful face and the simple heart. I do not choose that you should play cat-and-mouse with him as with those others. They can take care of themselves; he cannot. So I have come here"—he glanced around—"here to the place you profane with your adulterous fancies, to tell you that I forbid you to receive him any more in this private way. You hear?"

"You—you forbid!"

The contempt, the incredulity of the words cut like a lash. But he stood there stolid, immovable; the hideous landmark of her bondage; the man who had a right to demand, to object, to rebuke.

"Yes," he said, "I. You think me a fool, but I am not a fool. I give you rope. Oh, yes; plenty. But I do not choose that you hang yourself—yet. And when you do it shall be in company despicable as yourself. Do you understand?"

"I think you must be mad!" she cried furiously, "or drunk."

"Not either. I am only giving you a hint that I am still your husband, and that complaisance may not always

CALVARY

suit me. Why should it ? You flout me ; you insult me ; you waste my money ; you dishonour my name. We have been married but five years. My God ! What years ! I do not see why I should bear another five—even another one. So I am giving you this warning. And I give it not for your sake so much as for the boy you are trying to seduce. Because—of all your lovers, of all the empty-headed, dissolute fools you bring around you and mock me with, only one has remembered I am your husband."

She was too amazed to interrupt. She listened and wondered how he could know all this ; how have taken David's measure so accurately. For it was true. He *had* remembered that there was a master in this establishment ; he had never insulted him or made light of him—though to her knowledge their acquaintance had been a mere formality.

What was there about David that impressed people, that had won even the respect of this boor, as she called him ? This man who had seemed to have no thought for anything but money and the schemes and intricacies of a millionaire's exploits.

It was incredible. As incredible as that he should stand there, with that crucifix in his hands, looking reverently down at the face of the Sacred One his race had condemned as an impostor. He—a Jew by birth, if not by religion.

She let the flowers fall from her hands and gave way to hysterical laughter. It seemed so like a third-rate vaudeville in a French theatre.

"Don't laugh !" he said harshly. "If you had a spark of shame you would hide your head and pray your God to pardon you—the God you outrage and blaspheme with mockery such as *this* ! Now—I have said what I came to say. Remember it. I do not give such warnings twice !"

For a few moments she stood there, wondering if the world had turned topsy-turvy ; if she were going through a nightmare ; if it could be true that this despised, unimportant man whose name she bore, whose claims she loathed, had dared to arraign her conduct ? To utter a threat in her ears ? Hers !

"Talk of worms turning !" she muttered as once more

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she gathered up the velvet draperies and threw them over the table. "What can it mean? Has he begun to suspect? And oh—what a blind mole to fix upon the only innocent victim of the lot!"

With shaking hands she put the candlesticks and the books back in their places. Then she gathered up the crushed lilies and broken-stemmed narcissi and threw them into a waste-paper basket.

That done, she stood for a few moments leaning against the table, looking at its disarranged contents.

"There was something else, surely?" she thought.

Ah—the crucifix!

It was not there; neither was it on the floor nor in the room. He had taken it away. He—Reuben Leaffe, the Jew financier; the harsh, hard man of business who was not supposed to have a soul above public meetings and public dinners and huge financial schemes. Well, after that, surely the world must be coming to an end, or the millennium be at hand!

She rang for tea, and denied herself to any visitors. She felt she must think all this out. How had Reuben learnt of David's constant visits? What had made him suspect? Had any one told him? She did not credit him with any special perspicacity. She had so long indulged her freaks and fancies that she had begun to imagine he was incapable of jealousy—even of suspicion. Now he was awake, indeed. Oh, the tragedy of it! the absurdity of it!

She—a queen and ruler of society; she—to whom even royalty had unbent, who was welcomed everywhere, and whose popularity was as assured as her beauty, she—to be brought to task for any action, no matter how audacious!

It really did seem incredible.

Then a new idea seized her. Was this the reason of David's flight, his unexplained silence? Had Reuben met him, or watched him, or cautioned him? He was indelicate enough to do all or any of these. And David was sensitive on points of honour. He still argued of right and wrong; he was not nearly educated in society's

CALVARY

easy laws of give and take ; of convenient blindness and marital complaisance.

Poor boy ; poor silly, frightened boy ! Of course, that accounted for everything. If she had been warned and threatened, no doubt he had shared a similar fate.

Reuben might have called on him, or met him, and dropped a hint as to those constant visits when she denied herself to all other callers. David's innocent soul had taken alarm. He had followed the example of that other immaculate Joseph. Had fled, leaving explanations to her !

Only, unfortunately, she was not in a position to lay cause of complaint at his door. Potiphar had arraigned her. For once in her life some one had called "check-mate" to her triumphant game. And that the one she least expected and had least considered all the time.

As her anger cooled, a little touch of fear usurped its place. Had Reuben really meant what he said ? Was he going to give up the rôle of complaisance and take that of the outraged husband—demanding Cæsar's wife for Cæsar only ? Pah ! It was absurd ! Society couldn't hold together a day if men behaved like that. The conventions of marital life had never forbidden flirtation, more or less discreet. Who was Reuben Leaffe to talk of his honour ? to threaten her with legal penalties of disgrace if she chose—occasionally—to forget she was his wife ?

And yet she did not desire an *exposé*. She looked upon divorced women as fit subjects for lunatic asylums. How badly they must have played their cards ! It was perfectly easy to carry on an intrigue quietly and skilfully ; and the world never found fault with you if you were not indiscreet. That was what made her present position so intolerable. She had not even been—that. Her conscience assured her of complete innocence in the matter. Not a letter, not a *rendezvous*, not one word of love till that fatal Friday evening. Yet because of this most harmless escapade she had been threatened with all sorts of horrors !

If she only knew whether Reuben and David had met ?

A little hysterical laugh escaped her as her mind linked the two names. Quite an Hebraic episode—this. Possibly that accounted for the *fracas*. Jewish husbands had used to exact a very severe penalty from unfaithful wives. She

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had laughed often over those chapters of Leviticus describing their punishment. Even those primitive days it was : says the woman on whom the offence was visited !

Why had she not remembered that husbands of the Semitic race were extraordinarily strict in conjugal matters, however lax in others ; demanding chastity and cleanliness of life above all other domestic virtues. But Reuben ! Reuben——

The chiming of the clock on the mantelshef suddenly recalled her to a sense of time.

How long she had sat here ! And yet she had arrived at no decision ; only she felt that she hated her husband a hundred times more than she had ever hated him, for he had proved : is not the complaisant fool she took him for. He had appraised her with unflattering accuracy. And they stood now in an attitude of enmity and defiance instead of on the neutral ground of indifference.

She glanced at her writing-table. She had not written that intended letter to David. Should she do so ? Perhaps there was some spy on her actions ; some maid or footman told off for detective duty. Still, that would not prevent her from posting her own letters or receiving others. Only David would be such a fool at these sort of tricks. He would be sure to address her at her own house ; the postmark would betray him to a spy, and possibly Reuben would not hesitate to open any letter that might confirm his suspicions.

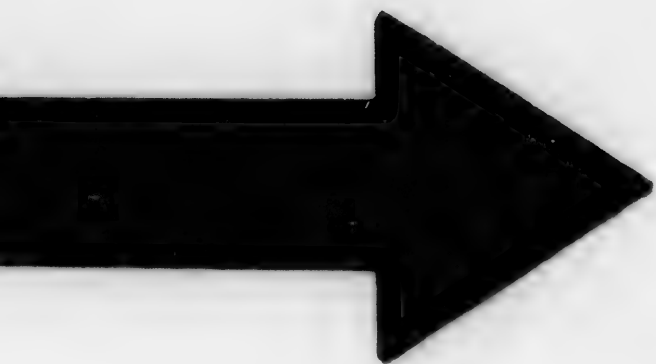
Then, on the stillness of the room, across the silence of the Sunday streets, came the sound of bells ; bells ringing for evening service.

She started and lifted her head. Should she go ? Might there be any chance of hearing a word of his whereabouts ? Would it seem less suspicious that she should attend the same church with the same regularity ?

She thought it would.

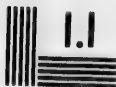
She rose to her feet and rang for her maid, and was dressed and drove to St. Ninian's, there to go through the mockery of Divine service, knowing herself at heart only a vain and sensual woman who had foolishly built her house upon the sands.





MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



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II

DAVID had not gone to Trebarwick. He felt he could not face Craddock's questions and Craddock's cynicism after so recent an experience as that of London.

He wanted to be alone and think out this new problem. The dividing line between faith and reason had narrowed strangely. Either they would meet and do battle with each other, or one would overleap the boundary and dismiss the idea of combat as unnecessary.

As was usual with him, he took his burdened soul to the lonely majesty of Nature. He was tramping the open country, bound for the wildest and loneliest part of the Cornish coast. The spring had not kept its early promise. Gales had been prevalent; south-west winds charged with rain had made the land desolate, and blurred the beauty of the fields and hedgerows. But the wild storms suited David's mood and stirred his energies. They were something to combat, something in touch with the waking of stormy passions, embryonic processes of thought; that combination of unnatural knowledge and *bizarre* ignorance so characteristic of his early training and his later beliefs. Here by the wild sea, here amongst legend-haunted moors and cromlechs, he wandered for many days. This place of saints and hermits, and ancient altars and crosses with strange inscriptions, was to him dear and familiar. He had tramped it in his boyhood with old Zachariah Pascoe; he had tramped it when his own "call" had sent him hither and thither, preaching the Word as it had been given unto him.

Oh, happy time! God-given hours of grace, when converts had flocked to hear him, and the sick and the weary had blessed his name, and far and wide had spread the fame of his spiritual powers.

He thought of them now in an agony of shame. How

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had he fallen from grace ; from prayer-filled heights of holiness ; from the deep, pure joys of Faith ! He tramped these places of past ministry with weary feet and aching heart. This was his hour of awakening. A chance word had unlocked the sluice gates barring the way to knowledge of good and evil. To the Truth of Life as it was, not as he had imagined it. " If only I had stayed here ! If only I had never gone to London ! " he muttered ever and again as a familiar landmark met his eyes, as the wild breath of the sea swept his brow.

He shunned habitations where recognition was possible, buying food at some wayside inn and eating but enough to sustain life. At night he slept in a barn or outhouse, or under the lee of some great cromlech that sheltered him from the wind or rain. And thus he fought out the problems of life that a few weeks ago had seemed so simple.

He had set no direct boundary to his wanderings, and one evening found himself trudging along a wild, rough road between Launceston and Boscastle. The gale was less violent, but the sky was still heavy with clouds. The long uphill road looked very desolate, straggling across the barren moor, studded by strange stone cairns under which the bones of primeval warriors lay at rest.

David was very weary. His stock of food was exhausted ; his limbs ached from that long struggle with the wind and rain. He stood still for a few moments and looked around at the rugged range of tors ; Brown Willy and Row Tor, and farther south the dome of Hengistdun, where the warriors of Britain had made their stand against the invading Dane. How lonely it all looked ; how desolate ! No trees, no hedges ; no village in sight ; and that endless road winding up and on as if only desirous of reaching the dull grey skies above.

Nature suddenly spoke of exhaustion and fatigue. He felt as if strength had failed ; as if he could go no farther. He sank down on a rough, jagged stone and searched his pockets for the bread he had put there that morning. He ate a few mouthfuls, and as he ate there suddenly swept over his mind the memory of the warm, gay Boulevards ; of the restaurants with their glitter and gaiety. The food, the wine, the happy, idle crowds ! Could he ever have

CALVARY

been amongst them? It seemed impossible that he should be that same David—so old he felt and tired; sitting there by the roadside little better than a tramp, heart-weary, lost in desolate imaginings.

"And if it all should lead to nothing—mean nothing!" he cried with sudden bitterness. "What am I denying myself? Everything: joy, pleasure, wealth, content; all that the Squire offered me; all that Stephen Ormiston could have helped me to obtain. I think I must be mad!"

He covered his face with his hands. Too spent and wretched even for tears, though the smart of them touched his eyes.

When he lifted his head he looked white and haggard and aged by years. Mental conflict is Time's best ally; nothing so wears and lines the face of Youth.

A pitying gaze seemed to tell him that. As he looked up a figure was standing before him, and in a moment pain and weariness were forgotten. He sprang to his feet. The cry of welcome was half incredulous, for only a moment before no human thing had been in sight.

"God be thanked for sending you!"—was all he could say, as hands clasped, and lips quivered.

"You needed me. I am here, David."

"Needed you? That's no new thing! But how in the world are you *here*? . . . In this wilderness of desolation?"

"Have I not told you I come from wandering to and fro the earth, even as Satan of old? But, for once, I am inclined to scold you, my young Samuel. You are changed almost beyond recognition."

David looked unsteadily. "I suppose I do look a bit of a vagabond. I've been on the tramp since—well, would you mind telling me what day this is?"

"Saturday—to the best of my knowledge."

"Saturday? A whole week!"

"Very foolish conduct. You are still very young, my David."

"Ah! but it's good to hear you say *that*; to see your face again. Why did you disappear from London so suddenly? I looked for you everywhere."

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"You had other friends, other instructors. I left you in good hands."

"Good?" questioned the boy bitterly.

"Yes—educationally considered. You have been passing through the fires of temptation and of trial. Perhaps it did not occur to you that you were again following in the steps of your Great Exemplar? Did not He know forty days of fasting and trial? The temptings of evil?"

"But how in the world do you know that I——"

"Ah! my David, some things are writ in the stars, and some on the faces of men. But let us be reasonable. It will soon be dark, and you look wearied out. I know of a house, not far away, where we shall find food and warmth and shelter. You look as if you needed such things. Come. Are you fit for another tramp?"

"With you for company—yes. I've forgotten I'm tired already."

They started on; climbing the hill, descending again. Then they took a footpath across a wide waste of moorland. After about an hour's walking they came in sight of a rough stone cottage built into the side of a massive rock. The hills near by had been quarried for stone, and huge masses of granite lay scattered around. The air was chill with the breath of the sea, and salt with the spray that the wind carried landwards. The distant thunder of breaking waves sounded an endless challenge. The familiar roar of the Atlantic was sweet as music to David's ears. He had no idea where he was, but that sound sprang out of chaos and darkness with a welcome he answered in his heart.

The Wanderer stopped before a rude stone wall with a gateless entrance. He passed through and opened the door of the cottage. David followed him into a paved kitchen simply furnished. A bright fire leaped up the wide chimney as if in welcome, and on the table were preparations for a meal. A wooden settle was at one side of the fire-place, an old-fashioned arm-chair on the other. At the opposite side some shelves formed a dresser, and were laden with plates and dishes of gay-coloured china. The one latticed window was curtained with a crimson curtain, and on the floor lay a rough, thick rug of the same

CALVARY

colour. An air of cosiness and comfort made the place doubly inviting after that long week of tramping and privation.

With a little pleased cry David stumbled to the fire, and held out his chilled hands to the welcome blaze.

Meanwhile his companion lit a lamp and set it in the centre of the table. Then David noted various appliances for comfort and convenience that seemed strange in such a humble abode. A silver spirit-lamp and coffee-pot stood on a rough wooden table under the shelves. China cups and plates were arranged on an oak tray. Swinging from a hook in the fire-place was a large iron pot whose fragrant steam seemed a promise of good things to come.

Only then did David realize how faint and hungry he was. He leant back in the chair and watched preparations for the meal with drowsy content.

"Now," said the Wanderer, "if you open that door over there you'll find a bedroom, and a place to wash. There's hot water in the kettle, if you want it. When you're ready, call out and I'll dish up the gipsy stew in yonder cauldron. I've not lived the nomad's life for nothing. I can always provide a decent meal for the hungry wayfarer, and you look as if you'd be all the better for it."

David rose. He felt strangely rested, strangely content.

"Do you live here?" he asked suddenly.

"Sometimes. I've not much taste for long residence anywhere save under the roof of Heaven. But don't stand there asking questions. The sooner you're ready, the sooner we shall enjoy our meal."

The inner room into which David went was furnished as a bedroom. Two small iron bedsteads stood on either side the walls; a thick fibre matting covered the floor; a zinc bath, a wash-hand stand, a few deal chairs, and a table, on which stood a small square looking-glass, completed the furniture. But here, again, furze and wood made a welcome blaze in the open fire-place, and threw warm light over the whitewashed walls. A large kettle swinging on an iron hook in the manner of the pot, reminded him how long it was since he had enjoyed a bath.

When he returned to the kitchen he looked a different

CALVARY

being. The smile of welcome on his host's face seemed to brace him like a tonic. The meal was ready, and he confessed that the joys of abstinence were as nothing to those of appetite.

Supper over, they cleared away the plates and dishes. Then coffee was made, and chairs drawn up to the fire, and the Wanderer lit his pipe and breathed a sigh of content.

"I'm not going to ask questions," he said. "I'm only going to talk. First and foremost, I can see you're wondering about my castle. It really is mine: first by annexation, then by inheritance. That is the story of most landed estates, if you trace them back to original possession. 'Let him take who may and keep who can.' The aristocracy of England was founded by robbery, and perpetuated by injustice. Most of our great names (save the mark!) are a legacy of royal immoralities, and there is no more amusing record of unexplained heirs than the Peerage. But I digress. A far-off ancestor of my own was once seized with the idea of founding a family. He arranged matters very simply. He just annexed a few acres of waste land, fenced it with a stone fence, and threw up a protection of granite and wattle as walls and roof. He took unto himself a wife and reared children, and died in the hoary sanctity of the simple life."

David smiled. "You have gone back a long way for that story," he said. "It has Dartmoor precedence. Not but what Devon and Cornwall are near enough to borrow from each other."

"True. Both rejoice in a singularly wild and romantic country: one with all the attributes of legend. Where knowledge ends, guess-work begins. Well, by the time I could claim my inheritance there was very little for me but guess-work. The castle had disappeared; so had the broad acres. I found but four broken-down walls, and out of them I rebuilt my domicile. After all, David, houses are a foolish invention. The more rooms the more style; the more style the more menials; the more menials the more servitude. For no one is a greater slave than he who possesses slaves. At first I concluded that one living-room was enough for my simple wants. This is it. Later—as a concession to lost travellers and vagabonds like myself—

CALVARY

I built up that second one. From time to time, as my tastes inclined to civilization, I added a piece of furniture or a few cups and platters. At the present time I'm far too comfortable. But we may as well look upon this as an interlude. What say you?"

"I can only echo yourself," said David. He drew a deep breath of content and leant back in the chair. His host had claimed preference for the settle as his own seat.

"Somehow," he went on, "I always *do* agree with you, don't I? Our discussions are seldom adverse opinions, even if they drop into arguments."

"Argument means a difference of opinion, though. How did you get on with Christian Science?"

David started. "Are you—a magician? How on earth did you know I was reading it up?"

"I make it my business to know and learn all about those who interest me. It's quite easy when you know how to do it. Before many years are over our heads we shall send our thoughts by speaking-tubes through the air, and rule the wave-currents of the atmosphere. The unknown only eludes the ignorant. I have discovered many things that I have not gone out of my way to patent. Of them all nothing is stranger than man's blindness to his own potentialities; his content with the sheep-like habit of following any leader instead of individualizing himself. But he is waking up a little, I fancy. He has acquired the knowledge of his own far-back incompetence, and by light of it views the travelled distance of past lives as a hopeful progression for future ones."

"Still," said David, "that does not explain your knowledge of my actions of last week."

"I am not going to explain it. But if you have anything to say about 'false claims' and 'mortal mind,' I am quite ready to listen to you."

"I heard about them first at a dinner-party in London," said David. "The exponent of their mysteries was an American. She was enthusiastic, if not lucid."

"It is not a subject on which any one can be lucid," observed the Wanderer, "not even its Founders."

"I thought there was only one—a woman?"

"Woman often carries out what man originates."

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"I was very much struck with her book," said David thoughtfully.

"Yet there is a great deal in it that is opposed to common sense; to the very Scriptures from which its main support is drawn. That the mind influences the body is not Mrs. Eddy's discovery. It has been the secret of miraculous cures ever since the science of healing became a recognized ally of physical existence. We hear of it in the old books of the Bible; it permeates Hinduism and Buddhism; it is known to savage races whose 'medicine men' are their only Christian Scientists; it explains the cures of Lourdes and other so-called shrines. It is merely the stronger force of mind over matter. But if you do away with matter, there is nothing for mind to act upon."

"You don't believe in it, I suppose?"

"Believe in Christian Science as interpreted by a neurotic and not too scrupulous American! Certainly not. But the science of Faith-healing is another matter. I believe *that* because I have proved it. To prove a Christian Science cure is a contradiction in itself. First of all, there is nothing to cure, because this extraordinary doctrine declares sickness, accident, even Death to be purely imaginary. You deny their reality by saying there is nothing to deny! This is not science at all. It is the ravings of lunacy."

"But, leaving the physical part out," said David, "what of the religious side of the question?"

"It seems to me such a parody of religion that I should not rank it with Christianity. One must recognize the body as an important factor in life. Without it we should not know life. Fancy denying ourselves as existing in order to *prove* the value of the bodily health which carries us through existence! Is it reasonable? Is it scientific? Is it philosophical? This American woman claims that mental healing lay dormant from Christ's time till the nineteenth century, when she re-discovered it and turned it into a very profitable means of livelihood and—notoriety. But this is a 'false claim' on her part. The healing powers of Nature have always existed; and cures as miraculous as those of Christ have always been possible to the faithful

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and the pure in heart. You, David, proved that power—once.”

The young man looked quickly up. “You mean——”

“I mean the episode which so puzzled our good Cornish Squire, and which I have not chosen to explain. There is a spiritual magnetism as well as a physical. When I heard you preach in London to that callous, worldly crowd, it was self-evident that you had hypnotized them into attention, not into belief.”

“That is true,” said David bitterly. “The impression did not last. I felt the change in myself; then in others. I lost power. Stephen Ormistoun had poisoned it all for me. Faith in Christ—in God, almost.”

“I knew it was bound to come, David. Some outside influence has interfered with your visionary life. Is it not so?”

“I—I have not sinned,” he faltered.

“Ah, my young dreamer, do you suppose I can’t recognize that fact? But you had to fly from temptation; to betake yourself to the wilderness. And the struggle has only begun. You’ve not conquered; but you’ve made a bold stand against the arch-enemy of mankind. You’ve not forgotten your mission.”

“I wish with all my soul I had never gone to London; never met Stephen Ormistoun; never seen——”

“—Her,” said the quiet voice. “It’s hard; but it’s done, and can’t be undone. And what’s worse, my David, you’re not finished with the battle. ‘Get thee behind me, Satan,’ was never said to a woman—with any success!”

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III

DAVID awoke. It was broad daylight, and he stared at unfamiliar surroundings. Then memory came to his assistance. All the events of the past week up to the previous evening rushed back, but he found he could review them calmly now. He rose and dressed, and went into the living-room where he and his strange friend had supped.

The fire was blazing, the table spread. The door stood open to a wild stretch of moorland. All around was stone and granite. A few straggling trees and shrubs were twisted and bent by the fierce Atlantic gales.

David stood there in the warm sunshine and drank in great draughts of the bracing air. He was not familiar with this special spot, but he guessed it was within touch of Boscastle. As he was standing there he saw the familiar figure for which he waited, approaching from the cliffs.

“I've had a glorious swim,” he called out. “You were sleeping so soundly I did not like to wake you. Are you ready for breakfast ?”

“Where exactly are we ?” asked David. “I thought I knew most places on the coast, but I don't recognize this.”

“No; and for a very good reason. The house is so built into the hill-side that at a short distance it looks like part of the rock. The quarries yonder have long been disused. If you stroll along the cliff you lose sight of my habitation at once. About a mile farther you can see Boscastle harbour. But come in. I want some coffee. You look more like yourself than when I found you yesterday. By the way, did you see the Squire before going on tramp ?”

“No. I left my luggage at the station and—then set out.”

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"And you've not told him you left London?"

"I—I did not think it was necessary."

"Oh! Well, you're your own master, so to say. Shall we walk over to Boscastle after breakfast? You've never preached there, have you?"

"No. And I'm not going to preach anywhere for—well—for a long time. I must settle some points in my own mind first."

"Is faith weakening?"

"It demands something deeper than mere hearsay; the bare surface of facts."

"Dangerous ground, David. Research and investigation have brought more converts to rationalism than to religion. Look at Craddock; look at Ormistoun. By the way, have you ever come across your friend St. Just since College days?"

"No. He wrote once or twice; then his letters ceased."

"I could tell you something about him."

They were seated at table. David put down his cup and looked eagerly at the speaker.

"I wish you would. We were such good friends. I felt sorry to lose touch with him."

"He went to his own people after leaving the College and insisted on an understanding. The stepfather is something of a bully; the mother a weak, rather frivolous person. But in a moment of weakness she let out that a certain sum of money was due to Godfrey. It had been left to his father, and was to come to him at the age of twenty-one. With a little legal assistance he secured his rights, and betook himself to Oxford. Then I heard of him as in some priestly seminary near Paris. His health broke down, and he was ordered rest and change of scene. He then went to Normandy. He is at present at Avranches. I was wondering——"

David's eager eyes gave quick response. "Oh, I should like to see him again! To hear how his training has affected him. Would it be possible?"

"Possible to go to Normandy? Of course! But I am doubtful as to the effect of Godfrey's morbid asceticism. He is almost a Romanist. Why he does not go quite over puzzles me. He holds extreme views on High Church

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principles, and Ritualistic practices. The last time I saw him——”

“How is it you go everywhere, and know everything?” exclaimed David.

“I go only where interest or personal concerns take me. As for knowing everything—I am neither prophet nor preacher, my David. Only, as I have told you, a vagabond philosopher who looks a little deeper than the surface of things, and who has long since discovered that the enemy of mankind is no horned and hoofed monster, but a deadly, deceitful, lying Fallacy armed with false authority and committing sins uncountable under the authority of Priesthood. To and fro the earth that enemy stalks, sometimes in one garb, sometimes in another; counting all means permissible so that his superiority is acknowledged, and man sees naught of his feet of clay.”

David looked at the fierce, stormy face with sudden fear. “Then, feeling thus, why did you found that College? Why did you interest yourself in me?”

The anger died out of those strange eyes. There was a long silence.

“God is long-suffering and patient. Should not man be the same? God works through man for a given purpose; purging the evil, training the good. Justice and Love are the root instincts of the highest humanity. Through them man feels his way to God, and by them God reveals himself to man. Here and there in my long wanderings I have found a soul seeking the Truth for the Truth’s sake only; not for desire of supremacy or superiority; not for personal advantage; only because, as in Christ’s case, a greater amount of spirituality had dowered that soul. And it seemed to me that all the world would be the better for its teaching, if it could preserve the purity and singleness of purpose that emphasized the life of the Great Teacher. And so—again and yet again—I have given that soul its chance; set eager feet upon the path; bade them go forth even as the chosen Twelve of old and fulfil their mission.”

David’s face grew very pale as he listened. “And I,” he said, “I was one of those you chose?”

“Was—nay, you are. You are only setting out on the

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road of your pilgrimage. Your destiny is still unfulfilled."

The young man rose and pushed back his chair, then began to pace the floor in evident agitation.

"Oh! if I knew—if I *knew*!" he cried bitterly. "If I still felt sure that God had called me; that I was fit to be a disciple. But I am drowning in darkness. I have lost my Faith!"

"No, David; you have only lost the faculty of blind absorption in ideals. You are material enough to think that your body is yourself, and your physical nature has suddenly expanded while the spiritual has remained quiescent. This earth, the world you have just left, are the scenes of an unending drama. Most of the actors are unknown, many invisible. But the smallest part is significant of the whole. That is what gives life such interest to a spectator—like myself."

David said nothing. For a few moments he stood looking out of the open door, trying to separate physical consciousness from its limitations. That had been so easy once. Why had the power left him? Guidance and direction seemed no longer at his call. He was as a bird dropped from its nest, and called upon to use its own wings for its own support.

Then suddenly the old longing for the sea swept over him; its spray, its breath, its mad, rebellious waves; its song of mystery, its hint of unbounded space. He went out, scarcely knowing he had gone, conscious of no lack of courtesy; only filled, as he had been filled of old, with an overmastering desire for the sense of those mystic realities he had once enjoyed.

For three days and nights David stayed in that lonely retreat; in that strange companionship. Gradually his mind recovered its balance. He could review those weeks in London more calmly. Insensibly they dropped into place as part of the scheme for his mental training; a help to the larger outlook inseparable from his call.

Forms of Faith were many; yet Faith itself remained serene and pure. Calmly contemplating the wild frenzies of mankind as a naturalist contemplates a disturbed ant-

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heap, even God Himself had at times lost patience with that ant-heap; scourged it; trampled it; destroyed it.

And Christ, the Perfect Exemplar, had He not also railed angrily at man's blindness; rebuked his iniquities and threatened his evil deeds with evil consequences? What wonder that weak followers of the Heavenly Light should also stumble? Should wander into dark byways, led by false teachers crying: "Lo! He is here"—or "there"?

The third day found the strange companions formulating a new plan. David was going back to the Hall for a short time. He felt he must see Ruth; he had neglected her unpardonably.

Then he would set off for a tour through Normandy in company with the Wanderer. He was anxious to see Godfrey St. Just. He could not make up his mind as to entering the priesthood by the usual forms, or continuing the part of itinerant preacher. He believed that the experience of Godfrey might help his decision. He had recovered sufficient composure of mind to reason out the strength of his vocation, as well as to believe in it. But now the method perplexed him.

The remembrance of cathedral services and church ritual placed the office of the ministry on a new basis; an influential and ennobling one. The power waged by a man like Stephen Ormistoun was surely greater than that of a tramp preacher like himself.

Craddock had once offered to build a church for him if he would be ordained, or a mission house if he preferred Nonconformity. Both offers had been rejected. He had wandered where he pleased, and preached to whom he pleased. The forms and trappings of ritual had seemed but vain foolishness; an attempt to dignify the creature for sake of the vanity of that creature.

Christ had had no church; had worn no vestments; prayed no set printed prayers. But David had soon found that the nineteenth century was no place for Christ's simple methods!

Civilization had arbitrated for set rules and set forms of religious worship. Here, as ever, man had asserted himself as the authority for supports and attachments of

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Faith; brought about a spiritual order as confirmation of apostolic authority. Lip service there was in plenty, and an appointed rule for church observances, judging from the amount of consecrated buildings and congregations. But—what did it all really mean?

Faith in God? Love of Christ? Cleanliness and purity of life? Honesty of principle and of action? Repugnance to the slavery of the flesh? Alas! no. None of these things were evident as proof of the sincerity of Christian belief. The world was vile; and men were wicked, and women—

He brought himself up short at that reflection, remembering the horrors of those London streets; the licensed harlotry of society. Remembering the women he had met in that house in Grosvenor Street; the things Ormistoun had told him of the inward corruption at the core of the golden fruit of civilization!

It all looked a hideous travesty of Right; an idolatry of Wrong. And most of those to whom the legacy of Christ's life and example had been left, were but false shepherds; hypocrites as the Pharisees of old, desecrating the Christian Temple even as the Jews had desecrated theirs of Jerusalem.

Where was Truth? Where was Faith? Where was Holiness?

Were they hidden in secret mysteries; committed to one order of men only—propagated by one Church? Lost to the thousands of others, as to the condemned millions of the Universe? If such a thing could be, then assuredly God was not just, and the Atonement went for nothing, seeing that its interpretation rested with a mere handful of dogmatists.

It was little wonder that at this stage of perplexity David should long for the counsel and experience of his College friend. The projected tour embraced that opportunity, as well as the companionship he loved best. With such hopes his mind grew calmer, and when he appeared at Trebarwick, Morgan Craddock was astonished at the change in him.

Yet it was regrettable in some ways. The fervour of a Divine Call, the joy and enthusiasm of youth—these had

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vanished utterly. Craddock's views and arguments were met without antagonism; listened to with deepening interest. Theological books were selected and studied instead of shunned.

But however surprising the change seemed to the Squire, it perplexed little Ruth a thousand times more. She scarcely recognized her old playmate, her confessed lover, in this sad-faced, serious youth. And he could not explain the change; it cut too deep; it hurt too much.

When they met and talked together he was appalled at the wide difference that suddenly showed itself between them. Those weeks in London, accepted so naturally, had proved him the social equal of any of those he met. But when he returned to Ruth he saw but a little Cornish maid, rough of speech, simple of habit; miles removed from his new fastidiousness, as well as from his new mental perplexities.

When he sat in the little cottage and listened to Zachariah Pascoe, it seemed as if a lifetime separated him from the boy who had so loved those old talks over Bible meanings; the literal acceptance of texts and chapters. It was torture to him now to combat doubt at every step; to listen to the old preacher and feel that he no longer stood for Gospel truth and Gospel certainty.

He hid these things as yet. He knew too little to acknowledge of how much he was ignorant. But an assured conviction was creeping over him that Scriptural accuracy could not go hand-in-hand with life as it was, or as it had been. He could no longer take a text and preach from it as from a sure foundation. Doubt, hydra-headed, sprang up at every such endeavour. Something had gone, and as yet—nothing had taken its place.

He sat with Ruth on the cliff in their old trysting-place. On the morrow he was leaving Cornwall. And this time he had no distinct idea of return. The note of farewell was the sadder for its indefinite promise of reunion, and Ruth's simple heart was wrung with pain.

She had recognized another change in her lover, one she could not express.

The brief ardour of David's love had died down into a

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quiet tenderness : the affection of brother for sister, not of lover for his promised bride. His kiss was cold ; his eyes held naught of passion. He had recognized how far apart were their feelings. Their souls prayed in a different form, their knees bent to a different altar ; they were as worshippers who adore different gods. Yet how and when the change had come neither could say.

For long they had sat there in silence gazing over the familiar sea, watching the changing colour of the clouds. From time to time the girl's wistful eyes went to her lover's absorbed face. He seemed to have forgotten her. But that was no unusual thing.

At last he spoke. "Do you know, Ruth, that where I am going there is another Mount like *that*—dedicated to the same Saint Michael ? It will seem to me as if I were still here ; still in touch with all that once drew me to Christ and His service."

The girl turned swiftly. "Ah, David, so often you say that—'*once*'! How comes it ? Such feelings can't be over and done with. But ah, lad, thou'rt changed ! I cannot blind my eyes to that."

"Yes, dear Ruth, I am changed. It is little more than six weeks since I bade you farewell in this same place. Four of them I lived in that great city of wickedness——"

"'Tis but one week since ye came back to the Hall, David !"

"So it is. I forgot. But I was in Cornwall, though not at the Hall."

"And ye didn't mind to send me a line, or a word ?"

"I was in great trouble, Ruth. I could write or speak to no one. I wandered, as of old, to and fro, right to Launceston and Boscastle. And then in my need that good friend came to me once more, and I was healed and comforted. I wish I knew who he was. Sometimes I think he must be some angel incarnated in man's form ; some messenger of Hope. I told you of that time in London when I went with him to visit the poor and sick in those dreadful quarters of poverty, and how they welcomed him and how his very presence seemed to bring comfort ?"

"Yes ; and ye said then that trouble was weighing on your heart, and he seemed to heal it."

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"So he did—for a time."

"What is the trouble, David? Can't ye tell me?"

He looked at the soft, pleading eyes.

It was horrible that as he looked he should remember other eyes; gold-flecked, passionate, beseeching, that had also entreated. He shook his head; his voice sounded almost harsh.

"No, Ruth, you wouldn't understand. And if you did, it would only make you unhappy."

"It means that you don't love me as ye thought, David. Ye've seen another woman, and she's taken you from me?"

"Ruth!"

He was outraged and indignant at the suggestion. But it was the natural one of a woman's hurt pride.

"Ruth—what are you saying? Such an idea never entered my head! It is something far different."

"Then—you do love me, David, spite of being so changed?"

"Am I changed?"

"Cruel changed, David. Your thoughts are never with me, as mine with you. Little heed dost 'ee take of comin' and goin' that make my life's sunshine or gloom. And your face is sad, and 'tis rare to see a smile on your lips. But if there's trouble in your heart, I'm willin' to bear it. Why can't you trust me?"

"Because I'm fighting something that concerns only myself and my soul."

"That's one and the same thing surely, David?"

"No, Ruth. Body and spirit are not the same. They are in perpetual conflict."

"But God will help thee, my dear life, if thee asks Him."

The quaint Cornish expression, the soft Cornish voice, touched David to some extraordinary weakness. He took the girl's toil-stained hands and kissed them reverently. "Ah! pray for me, Ruth," he said. "For I need your prayers. Something has gone from me—the old faith, the old joy. I'm fighting a hard battle: the battle with *doubt*."

"Doubt!" she echoed, and her face grew pale. "Doubt

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of what, David? Not of thy Master, the blessed Saviour, or the hope of salvation in the life to come?"

He was silent, voicing those primitive truths one by one. Could it be that they fell coldly on his ears, demanding something more than mere acceptance?

"David—David! Why don't ye speak?" she implored piteously.

"Because—I cannot, Ruth."

She burst into sudden tears. The fear that had been creeping closer during these sad, strange weeks was very near at hand. Its cold touch terrified her.

"Oh, dear heart! why did ye ever go to that cruel, wicked city? I saw the change the moment ye returned. Oh! what is it that's come between us? Ye're not going to turn your back on Christ, David? You—that were so true and faithful a disciple; whose voice has led men and women to believe and to be saved; whose name is blessed whenever 'tis heard for these four years o' ministry! Oh, it's some cruel joke ye're tellin' me!"

"A joke! My God, Ruth, you must be blind not to see what this means to me! How it has changed me!"

He sprang up suddenly from their rock seat. He threw his arms out to the sea with a sudden wild gesture. "If I might cast myself *there*, into those deep depths and be at rest it would be an easier thing than to face life as life has become! But I know that would not end it. I must fight the fight as others have done; go down into the darkness ere I can find the light. I am but a spiritual castaway clinging to a spar, even as in my helpless infancy I must have clung to the spar that meant temporal safety. Here where I found Faith, I have lost it; here, where visions of splendid possibilities came to me, I renounce those visions. I am an unworthy servant—a broken reed."

"Oh, David! Oh, my dear life! Don't—don't!"

The girl had risen too; was standing, gazing at him with piteous eyes, holding out imploring hands.

The sight of her distress calmed him. Oh! fool and weak that he was, again had his resolution been broken. He stood self-confessed as a traitor to his cause, burdening this faithful heart with the grief of his unworthiness.

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to tell you. I hoped to come back with restored faith—new hope. Oh! you must help me, you must pray for me! Surely God will hear the cry of your pure heart!"

"But your faith was mine, David," she said. "Together we've trod the path of hope and love; together we've prayed. If doubt hev come to you, you who are so much cleverer and wiser than myself, it seems as tho' something was wrong. Is it the Bible, David? Many times I've asked gran'vather 'is this true' or 'that'? It seemed somehow as if 'twouldn't fit: the cruelty of God with the lovin' kindness; the power of evil when He was all good; the shedding of His dear Son's blood as a sacrifice for all sin; and yet sin is still in the world—bad as ever!"

David turned swiftly. "You too, Ruth! You have begun to question, to reason, to doubt? Ah, pray to escape that temptation! Better the peace of ignorance than the wisdom of enlightenment; better the blind belief that makes us falsely true than the flashlight of truth that makes us false to faith."

He turned away. But she followed; clasped his arm with entreating touch.

"You're going away, David, to foreign places, to a new life. It seems to me we'll not meet again ever in the same way. The *oneness* of our thoughts and feelings, of our faith—that's gone."

He stopped short on the cliff slope and looked down at the sweet face, the brimming eyes. What had gone out of him? The power to love, the power of manly, human feeling? It seemed so. A chill as of death was in his heart. His eyes held only an entreaty to spare him, to avoid the pain of that inevitable farewell.

"I shall come back," he said hoarsely. "If I live I will come back, Ruth—to the sea and this dear land, and you, sweetheart."

She burst into a passion of tears at the tender word, laying her head on his arm in unrestrained grief.

"Oh, David—David! My David, God help thee! God show thee the truth!"

His own head bent over hers; his lips touched the soft uncovered hair. Why couldn't he love her, comfort her,

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stay with her? Live the simple, godly life of these good Cornish ministers who served God with their whole heart, yet fulfilled human duties also? Why must he needs throw every plan and purpose overboard into that wild sea of sectarian confusion which has wrecked so many ardent souls? Could he not have held those three simple truths and guided his life by them—God, Christ, the Scriptures? Were they not sure and safe?

The Church was founded on them. One could never get away from that fact. All the complications were of man's making: man to whom religious life meant one thing and spiritual life another. Never could the two blend with perfect unity—never while the world existed as a human world.

"Ah, don't cry, dear Ruth!" he whispered brokenly. "My heart is sore and sad enough without your grief, though that grief is another of my burdens. Perhaps I was wrong to speak of love to you. The time was not ripe. I didn't know myself; didn't recognize how helpless I was and how weak!"

She lifted her head and dried her tears. "If you're weak, David, you know from whom strength comes. You've not strayed too far for *that*."

"God forbid!" he cried involuntarily.

"He will be your guide and comforter again," she went on. "He is your Father still, David, even as ye are His son. If the door seems closed, 'tis your hand has closed it, not His. One day you'll knock again, and it'll open—widely, gladly; and there'll be joy in the angels' hearts and Heaven will be very near, even as of old."

The simple words, the simple faith. How beautiful they were, even as an echo of that lost music which had once thrilled them with a sweeter meaning.

He did not answer her. Words were poor things to convey a tithe of those desolate feelings which made his heart heavy as lead, and had turned even human love to bitterness.

The one real thing to him was that he must thresh the whole matter out for himself. The origin of Faith; the truth of Christianity; the reason for this soul tumult—so terrible, so old, so unavailing!

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IV

MORGAN CRADDOCK was pacing to and fro his study absorbed in thought. On the table lay some letters which he had thrown down after reading them. One was from Stephen Ormistoun.

It began with an apology for a stranger addressing a stranger and explained the reasons. He had hoped for some word from David after his abrupt departure. None had reached him.

"He left me in a perturbed and unsettled state of mind," went on the letter. "I lay some blame to myself, though the seeds of disturbance had been already planted. But I liked the boy—who could help it? We have musical geniuses and artistic geniuses and literary geniuses. I should call David Hermon a spiritual genius. He attracted an enormous amount of attention here, and I have been inundated with inquiries about him. Strangely enough, one of the most persistent of these inquirers is a wealthy Jew financier who is anxious to assist our young evangelist in any way that you, as his ostensible guardian, may deem fit. If the young man wishes to go to Oxford, his expenses would be paid. If he desires a living, it would be purchased. If there is any scheme of missionizing or of foreign travel afoot—well, there is a helping hand ready to assist in it. Candidly speaking, it seems to me little short of a miracle to hear such propositions from a man like Reuben Leaffe (or Levi, as he really is). But he called on me here at my flat, and made these suggestions on David's behalf. I, of course, was unable to speak of his future plans; but I promised to lay the matter before you, and I enclose his letter. Perhaps you will kindly advise him as to David's movements or intentions. I am also forwarding a letter from a lady who is enormously interested in David's history. She has got hold of some

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theory respecting his parentage, and is working it out in a manner peculiarly her own. She has asked me to send you this letter, which I accordingly do."

This missive lay also on the table. Craddock read it with some amusement and a good deal of impatience. What absurdity to try and weave a romance around this boy! If in twenty-one years no clue had been found as to his birth, what use to begin a search now? Besides, though he refused to acknowledge it, he rather preferred that David should know no other guardian than himself.

From the first the boy had held a strange attraction for him; had slipped quite naturally into that empty niche of his lonely life; had won him from the selfishness that had threatened to bar out human interests. He had been astonished by the purity and strength of that young nature; and proud, too, of his proficiency at St. Blasius. Carefully as he had watched him, he had seen no trace of vice or evil habits. David had planned his life consistently on the example of the young Nazarene whom he called and revered as Master. He had been a faithful disciple until—until that London experience.

The Squire paused and again took up the letters. Odd they should have come to-day; to-day, when the boy was leaving Cornwall for months—a year—perhaps longer.

He re-read the curious arguments of Lady Silchester. What sort of woman could she be? And why should she trouble her head as to who David really was? She had actually discovered the name of a vessel wrecked on the Cornish coast in the year the boy had been found! She now proposed a visit to the spot and an interview with Rachel Perryn, the boy's foster-mother. It seemed absurd.

David had certainly mentioned her name casually as one of the fashionable people he had met in London; but he had never talked of her as he had talked of Mrs. Van Hoorn, or of Stephen Ormistoun.

"Well, I can't prevent her coming, if she really wishes to do so," thought Craddock. "But when she finds we've no 'Carltons' and 'Metropoles' here in Cornwall, I think she'll soon repent of her curiosity. Must I answer

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this rhodomontade ? I'll ask David first. I suppose he'll be in to dinner, though it seems but an empty form ? I don't know what's come to the boy ! ”

He put the letters in his coat pocket and then seated himself in his usual chair. He was conscious of a strange lassitude which of late attended the smallest exertion. He had aged much in these last four years. He was not yet sixty, but he looked much older.

His eyes wandered over his splendid bookcase. He passed in review its storied treasures. Like Faust of old, he felt tempted to lament :

“ I cannot break the dreary chain
That to earth doth bind me.”

Yet of what use was all the learning and all the wisdom and all the stores of man's knowledge ? Generation succeeded generation, and age succeeded age, and men committed the same follies and sinned the same sins and were swept away by a new civilization no whit purer, wiser, healthier than the old. Teachers and preachers arose, and strange religions and shallow psychology, and yet the *ego* that was man persisted ; a being of a myriad lives, or a myriad lives of being ; a creature complex and horrible, could he but see himself as God must see him ; taking God as his Maker and the originator of his destiny.

Those books, with their legacies of dead men's thoughts, their histories of strange passions and crude faiths, were they not tainted with this same malady of uselessness ? Who was the better for all their labour ? There was but one book in all the world of books that summed up man and human purpose with any success. That was the book of Ecclesiastes. All the wisdom of life was in those twelve short chapters ; and all its tragedy and all its despair. Whatever came before was no wiser ; whatever followed no surer. Everything was vanity ; nothing endured. Then one reached the last dread hours when the keepers of the house trembled, and the windows were darkened, and desire failed, and the epitaph was still the same : “ Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher. All is vanity.”

“ Not all,” said a voice, suddenly breaking the silence.
“ A little love, a little friendship, a little charity—are left.

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Why, my good Squire, you are indeed to be pitied if you've lost count of these ! ”

“ It is useless to express surprise at your advents ! ” exclaimed Craddock, rising somewhat feebly. “ You know you are always welcome. And David seemed to think you would come here to-night. ”

“ I half promised it, and I found I could keep the promise. But why were you repeating the experiences of the Jewish preacher so persistently ? ”

“ Was I speaking aloud ? I had no idea — ”

“ You are growing morbid, my friend, as I always anticipated. I see you are alone. Where is David ? ”

“ He went out just before sunset. I expect he will be in soon. Come and sit down. It's good to see you. It is — let me think — four years since we last met ? But you have seen David recently, he tells me. ”

“ Yes. I played Touchstone to his melancholy Jacques when I found him wandering in the forest of disillusion. Our poor saint ! He has gone through troublesome times of late. ”

“ He is not very communicative. But I could read mental disturbance. It originated in London, I suppose ? ”

“ No. It originated *here* — and with you ! ”

“ Are you sure of that ? ”

“ I am always sure of a statement before I make it, my good Squire. But I'm not blaming you. It had to be. It was written in the purposes of his destiny. He could not have lived for ever in an atmosphere of sanctity. I wonder he lived so long. ”

“ Strange to say, I have just received a letter from that cleric who got him up to London — Ormistoun. It sounds to me apologetic. But I have only had the merest hints of what occurred. ”

“ An emotional earthquake. Our young charge has been rudely and roughly shaken from that spiritual poise he maintained so long. Ormistoun is a man something like yourself. A trifle more dangerous, perhaps. Has he explained his reasons for exploiting David and then — disillusionizing him ? ”

“ You had better read his letter. I was somewhat puzzled by it. You were there ; you met him. Possibly

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you can read a different meaning into these polished phrases?"

He gave the letter, and watched the dark, eager face bent over the closely-covered pages. But ere the first was finished, David came in from the garden through the open window, and his delighted greeting broke up the conference.

As usual, the magical influence of that strange presence calmed the fever of his mind. The three sat together as of old and talked of the projected journey of the morrow. The Squire said nothing of Ormistoun's letter or its strange enclosure. He was waiting on the advice he had asked. But no opportunity came, for David did not leave them. At last a casual inquiry from Craddock as to whether he had said good-bye to his foster-mother, sent him off to the lodge. He accused himself of negligence, and his punishment meant a deprivation of the society he loved best. Then the Squire reopened the subject with eagerness.

"You have read that letter?"

"Yes. I am surprised at the offer from Reuben Leafie. Our Saint David seems to meet benefactors wherever he goes!"

"I suppose I must tell him?"

"Would you mind letting me see that other letter—Lady Silchester's?"

Craddock gave it. The Wanderer smiled as he read the effusive and inconsequent sentences.

"Evidently this philanthropist is not one who 'does good by stealth and blushes to find it fame,'" he said.

"Most of her charities are the promptings of curiosity. She would like to find out everything about everybody. David has interested her, and she knows nothing about him. Yet, if you think of it, my good Squire, no more do you. But you have never troubled your head to find out if there was anything to know. He was just David—a miracle of the sea, or a caprice of sexuality, which you prefer. Has he himself ever expressed a desire to know more?"

"Never. I don't believe he cares a bit. You know how indifferent he is to human affection? I have never heard him utter a word of love or tenderness."

"Yet he has stores of both! But, as yet, they are

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dormant. His spirituality has almost extinguished his humanity. You remember, don't you, that incident in Paris?"

"Yes. But neither you nor he would explain it."

"Because I am quite sure you would not have believed it."

"There was only one conclusion to draw. He was, like other boys, curious. And when the opportunity came—why, the opportunity was taken."

"That—has been your belief?"

"Certainly. You don't mean to say——"

"I mean to say you are quite wrong. David was not decoyed, as you suppose, by any suggestion of vice. I discovered him by means of a secret agency known to me. And I found him in a horrible den, by the bedside of a dying man; a renegade priest. It is a story so strange that I have hesitated to speak of it. I would not do it now were it not that this woman's curiosity might bring a hornets' nest about our ears."

Craddock looked up with eager interest. "I think," he said, "you ought to tell—me."

"Quite so. You never questioned David as to that incident?"

"I remembered I had been young myself."

"Odd how morality sticks in its own groove of reasoning! Because most young men sin as soon as sin becomes possible, all youth must do the same. But, thank God it doesn't! There is a masculine purity—perhaps I should say fastidiousness—far exceeding feminine virtue. *That*, after all, is the enforced code of civilization and a certain ideal of the proprieties. To know evil and to shun it because it is evil, is a better thing than to be guarded from its knowledge and then profess innocence."

"I think you are right," said Craddock. "But your instance is very exceptional."

"Less so than you imagine. The instances might be multiplied unceasingly but for the absurd reasoning that has crept into our schools, our teaching, and our accepted conditions of morality. With regard to David. Throw your mind back on two incidents of Paris. The first was connected with a girl who forced her company on us one

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night in the Elysées at a *café-chantant*; the second at the *Bal Tabarin* at Montmartre, when we lost him in the crowd."

"I remember both," said Craddock.

"Well, that girl Poucette, whom we met at the ball, was rather piqued at our young saint's indifference. She contrived that we should be separated by the crowd, and a friend of hers, a man, got hold of David and, telling him you had met with an accident in the crush, took him to a street and a house where he was virtually imprisoned. I fancy, from what I could ascertain, that mademoiselle and her companions intended giving our saint a rough time of it; but it chanced that in a room at the top of this disreputable mansion a man was dying of fever. His delirious ravings filled the place and disturbed the other lodgers. David learnt that the dying man was a priest—a renegade, as I said before—and having been cast out of the Church could benefit by none of its last offices. Well, he begged them to let him go to this man. It suddenly struck the half-drunk, semi-vicious *cocottes* that it would be an exquisite joke to take an heretical priest (for David had announced his calling) to the bedside of a pseudo brother of the True Church. The idea was no sooner conceived than it was acted upon. They dragged the boy up the stairs to the garret where the poor wretch lay, and then bade him perform his offices. . . . Now, my dear Craddock, prepare yourself for a surprise, and wonder no longer that I counselled David to be silent on the whole matter and let you draw your own conclusions—as you did."

A red spot glowed on Craddock's thin cheeks. His eyes were full of questions.

"It will sound like a page from a mediæval romance," continued the Wanderer. "But it is all perfectly true. I—can vouch for that. No sooner did the boy enter the room and stand by the bed than the delirious ravings ceased. He laid his hand on the dying man's brow and stood there gazing down with those mystical eyes of his. And lo! a miracle. The man's temperature sank to normal; his breathing grew quiet. In a few minutes he slept. All that vicious, noisy crew grew ashamed. One

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by one they stole away and left the boy alone, kneeling by the bed-side."

"But you said——"

"I said that the incident led to stranger happenings. So it did. The boy stayed by the sick man all that night. He told me we had completely passed out of his head. And I believe it. When the poor dying wretch awoke he was quite calm, quite conscious; though when he saw David by him he seemed to take him for Christ. That delusion remained until the end. He died in peace. On the third day I had traced the boy to this place of infamy. What I had feared to find—what *you*, my dear Craddock, were satisfied you *had* found—was something widely different from the reality!"

The silence lasted long.

At last Craddock lifted his head. "It sounds, as you said, like a page of religious romance manufactured in the interests of saintship."

"But it leads to something you could never imagine. The priest, before he died, confided to David a packet of letters and papers. This, of course, is *Porte St. Martin* drama drafted on to the mediæval romance. There were many of them, all in the French language. David had not had the curiosity to look at them when I came upon the scene, and as he had confided the story so he confided the legacy. I took the papers away with me. I brought back our lost sheep, as you know; and not till long afterwards did I trouble to look into the matter at all. When I did——"

"Yes—yes!" cried Craddock breathlessly.

"That, my friend, makes another story—almost as incredible as the first. Tell me—have you ever heard of the Princess Valma?"

Craddock's face grew pale as death. He half rose from his seat, then sank back again. "Why—why——"

"You answer the question by your own. You *have* known her? It is not an unusual honour. At one time she was the s'ar in a firmament of lesser celebrities in Paris. She had her preferences. Sometimes she disappeared for months—a year even. The steppes of

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Russia knew her, and the cities of the world, and the—
desert.”

Craddock uttered a faint exclamation. “Come to the point!” he said hoarsely.

“She was the embodiment of vagrant fancy; not more evil than Nature creates her type; capable at times of overwhelming self-devotion and self-sacrifice. One such caprice drove an unfortunate priest to perdition. But its ultimate result was one of those freaks of Nature which lead one still to believe in the sport of the gods. The sensuality of one individual and the spirituality of another led to the incarnation of a type of human purity, almost unexampled.”

Craddock sprang to his feet. “My God, man! what are you hinting at? What do you mean?”

The strange speaker raised his hand and pointed to the veiled picture on the easel. “If you look *there*,” he said, “you can read my riddle.”

Even as he spoke the door opened, and David entered. He glanced at the two men with natural wonder. There was an expression of disturbance, of unrest in their faces, quite unusual.

“Is anything the matter?” he asked. “Am I interrupting you?”

The fierce, strange eyes of Craddock fastened on his face; read it line by line, feature by feature. Then, with a groan, he sank back into his chair.

“Go—go—both of you!” he cried wildly. “I must be alone. I must think!”

“Come, David,” said the voice he never disobeyed. And in silence they passed from the room.

Moments passed. The half-hour struck from the clock; but Craddock never moved. His mind was back in the past; how far back he alone knew. He saw the brilliant stars above the desert wastes; he heard strange voices and strange sounds. And, lying in the tented dusk of those solitudes, he saw also a figure; veiled, exquisite: the refinement of civilized sensuality dignifying a caprice that lent itself to an Odilesque’s loveliness and a Messalina’s cruelty. At last he lifted his head and rose, and

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with feeble steps crossed the room. He stood before that veiled picture, gazing at the curtain as if he could penetrate to what it concealed. Slowly, fearfully he drew it aside.

The face at which he gazed was a woman's—lovely, smiling, provocative. But what was there in the violet depths of the eyes, the soft gold of the hair, that recalled another face—young, grave, spiritual? The face of David.

He dropped the curtain and turned away.

Was it fate? Had no mere chance thrown that waif of the sea on these shores and made him his guardian? Did something deeper than mere attraction lie in that strange beauty which had so often puzzled him: the attraction of likeness, of memory, of sin?

He had no need to read those letters committed to David's care. He knew that story of the priest and the Princess as all Paris had once known it. How near the boy had been to discovering it for himself—how terribly near! And what a burden for his sinless soul!

He bent his head and, with a stifled groan, gave himself up to all the bitterness of memory. "But he shall never hear the truth from me," he muttered fiercely. "Never. That I swear!"

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DAVID had gone, and the light of Ruth Pascoe's life had gone with him.

Mechanically she took up the duties of that life and ministered to her grandfather's necessities; tended his failing strength; was always loving and helpful. He saw no change in her save a new quietness; a tendency to sit with idle hands lost in thought. But a month later, just as the smile of summer broke warmly over sea and land, the message came for the old preacher. He passed away in his sleep sitting in the old worn chair, his hands clasped on the old worn Bible.

Ruth knew herself alone at last. She did not grieve for that end. It seemed so right and natural a thing. But when he had been laid to rest in the little churchyard, a question rose as to where she was to go and what she was to do.

Then Rachel Perryn offered her a home. She complained of failing health and that the lodge duties were more than she had strength for. If Ruth would make her home with her and help her she would be doing a real service. Ruth was too simple-hearted to look for other reasons than those given. She gladly accepted the offer. Was not Rachel Perryn, David's foster-mother? Did she not love him even as Ruth herself? What deeper joy than to be with one to whom she might talk of him and hear of him, and pour out her simple adoration of him every day of her life?

The lodge at Trebarwick was a comfortable four-roomed cottage with a pretty garden and a poultry yard. It was a delightful change from the rough and exposed fisher cot on the cliff. And with the change a deeper refinement crept into the girl's life. She began to read more, for books there were in plenty—most of them David's. She

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took more pains with her appearance; her neat black gowns touched the ground instead of only reaching her ankles; her beautiful hair was carefully brushed and coiled about her head. Craddock, seeing her as he passed in or out of the gates, made inquiries as to her presence, and remembered that David had spoken of her.

Matters were thus when one evening the hoot of a motor and the sound of its checked engine, drew Ruth to the gates.

She stared in open-eyed amazement at the strange machine: a huge white car, driven by a weird-looking object in dust-covered leather with huge goggles over his eyes. The car was open and contained two ladies, who also wore goggles and were so swathed in veils and dust-cloaks it was impossible to say whether they were young or old.

"Is this Trebarwick Hall?" inquired a clear, rather hard voice.

"Yes, ma'am," said the girl.

"Does Squire Craddock live here? Is he at home?"

Ruth answered in the affirmative. The gates were opened, and the car swept in and disappeared up the drive.

Full of astonishment at the sight, she went within and described the visitors to Rachel Perryn. It was an unknown experience for the Squire to have lady visitors at all. None had come in Rachel's time, or to her knowledge. Half an hour later the car returned and was stopped at the gates. The two occupants descended and came up to the lodge.

"I want to speak to Mrs. Perryn," said the elder of the two. "Is she your mother?"

"Oh, no, ma'am; no relation at all. Will you walk in?"

They followed her into the pretty little parlour, its windows framed in roses, its simple, chintz-covered furniture clean and dainty as country laundering could make it.

"Really—quite an idyll!" exclaimed Lady Silchester, for the visitor was no other. She and Lady Pamela were doing a motor tour in Devon and Cornwall: a tour originated with a strategy into which this visit fell with no apparent motive.

"What a bear that man was!" answered Lady Pamela, throwing back her motor veil. "You're no wiser than when you came, Aunt Thusa."

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"At present, no. But I'm convinced he knew more than he would say. Men, especially wealthy men, celibate men, don't go about adopting other people's children without a reason. His very reticence convinces me that there is a mystery. I've always thought so. He never answered my letter. Such rudeness! But I'm determined to get at the root of things. Ah—here comes Mrs. Perryn!"

She put up her tortoise-shell lorgnettes and examined Rachel's face and figure as if she were a piece of furniture.

"I am Lady Silchester. I have Mr. Craddock's permission to put a few questions to you, Mrs. Perryn," she began—"questions on the subject of a child discovered by you and adopted by you some twenty years ago."

"Do 'ee mean—David, my lady?"

"You called him so. It is not his real name, of course?"

"It were my husband's name, an' we gave it to the boy as we'd ha' given 'is own."

"Yes, so I heard. Very kind of you. But I understand he chose a name for himself when he left your roof?"

"The Squire—Mr. Craddock o' the Hall yonder—'e took a great fancy to David, my lady. 'Twas 'e as 'ad him eddicated for the ministry. Not but what David was a nat'ral born preacher. Why, I remember when 'e were but a little lad an' he took the Bible from vather—my 'usband that was, my lady—an' 'e chose a text and preached a sermon, the most won'erful I've ever 'eard. An' yet we've 'ad some powerful speakers 'ere in our time."

"Ah—very interesting," said Lady Silchester, opening a note-book that hung from her châtelaine. "I have jotted down a few questions, my good woman, which I should be much obliged if you would answer to the best of your ability. I am deeply interested in this young man. Of course, you are aware that he came to London on an Evangelistic Mission and made a very great sensation? He was so wonderfully earnest, and so wonderfully young."

Rachel wiped her eyes with the corner of her white linen apron.

"'E were just a saint, my lady. Many's the time I've wondered about 'im an' thought o' that other blessed mother as we'm told of in Scripture, 'who kept these

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things an' pondered them in 'er heart.' Well, David's life, so far as I knows of et——"

"Yes—yes!" interrupted Lady Silchester. "But what do you know? I want to get right back to the beginning: the year you found him; the date of the month—the day; how you found him; whether there was anything to trace—any mark, sign, or clue."

Rachel looked bewildered. "If 'ee'd kindly put them questions one at a time, my lady? I'm a bit mazed with so many."

"Very well. The year?"

"That's written in my dear 'usband's Bible. I mind it well. Eighteen 'undred and seventy-seven; and the month—that were August; the day the seventeenth of that same month."

Lady Silchester wrote the replies down on her tablets. "That's very satisfactory. About what age did you think the child was?"

"From a year to fifteen months, my lady—a beautiful, fine-grown babe as ever one'd wish to see."

"I don't know much about—babes. I never had any. But, judging from the young man's quite extraordinary good looks, I should say you had reason to be proud of him as an infant. Well—the next thing?"

"Your pardon, my lady. But might I ask *why* ye wants to know all this? Mr. Craddock 'isself never axed so many questions."

"I have told you I am deeply interested in the young man. I should like to be instrumental in proving the facts of his real parentage. I have a theory——"

"Don't talk over the woman's head," interposed Lady Pamela sharply. "Ask her if she hasn't something that belonged to him—when he was found."

Rachel looked quickly at the speaker, wondering at her beauty no less than at the easy insolence of her manner.

"I'se naught o' that," she said simply. "Mother naked 'e was an' tied to that broken spar only wi' a bit o' rope. 'Twas nothin' short of a miracle 'ow 'e come there—throw'd up 'igh an' dry on the beach. An' every other soul lost that awful night."

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"Do you mean to say there was no other body washed ashore? no wreckage? nothing to give a clue to the vessel?"

"I never heerd o' any, my lady."

Lady Silchester again consulted her notes. "There were three wrecks on that date," she said. "I got the particulars through the Board of Trade and the ship owners. One, a large outward-bound steamer, wrecked off the Scilly Isles; another near Boscastle; and a third, a French barque, last sighted off the Gull Rock lighthouse. Is that anywhere near?"

"No, my lady. 'Tis a long ways off our cove."

"But couldn't a vessel drift or be blown by the wind in this direction?"

"O' course, my lady. Many's the one as steers out o' their course, or is driven by the gales to these awful rocks."

"Well, then, this French ship——"

"My dear Aunt!" interposed Lady Pamela impatiently.

"Why are you so persistent in fixing that French ship as the cradle of your infant Moses? It might as well be one of the others."

"Leavin' alone ships as no one knows, nor ever 'ears of," added Rachel Perryn, "at first my 'usband an' I did all we cud do to find out about that vessel, but 'twas no manner o' use. Then as time went on we just looked upon the child as our own."

"And he was wearing no little garment—nothing marked?" persisted Lady Silchester.

"Nary a stitch, my lady. 'Ow 'e didn't perish o' cold is a miracle. But there—the whole thing was more wonderful than a pixie story. I've always thought there were a purpose behind it. David weren't saved from the sea for nothin'. He'm a vessel sanctified by the Lord for 'is own service, an' a shinin' light on the path to unbelievers."

Lady Pamela rose impatiently. She had no taste for texts apart from a sensuous ritual. "Well, you've come to the usual deadlock," she said. "Now it's my turn." She flashed round on the astonished Cornishwoman. "Where is your adopted son at the present time?" she asked. "Not—here, I suppose?"

"No, my lady. He'm gone to some furrin' place. I can't mind the name o' it. Maybe Ruth can tell 'ee what 'tes."

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"Is Ruth your daughter?"

"Oh, no, my lady. I never 'ad no children. All o' my motherhood 'twas spent on David."

"Who is Ruth—then?"

The girl entered on the question, lovely with the natural loveliness of her fresh, unspoilt youth. Lady Pamela's eyes took in every line of the graceful figure; the beauty of colouring; the wealth of hair. Had David been blind and cold to these charms as to her own?

"You called me, Mrs. Perryn?" said the girl.

"Iss, my dear. Do 'ee know where David's to? He'm wrote to 'ee last week, ye know?"

Lady Pamela flushed suddenly. He wrote to *her*? to this common country girl! And she had not been considered worthy of a line since they had parted!

"I can't mind the name o' the place without I get the letter," said Ruth simply. "It was queer foreign spelling."

Lady Pamela's lip curled contemptuously. "I should suppose it would be Greek to you," she said. "But perhaps you would oblige me by letting me see the letter?"

"See the letter? *My* letter!"

The angry colour flew to the girl's very brows. That a stranger should ask this!

"Is it so very private and sacred?" sneered Lady Pamela. "I should have thought from what I know of the young man that there was not very much in common between you!"

Ruth's eyes dilated; her colour faded. Her heart seemed to swell with a sudden new emotion: anger, wonder, hurt pride.

"What you know or think of David may be true or not, my lady," she said coldly. "But he is my lover, and we've been tokened these many months, and his words are sacred to me!"

Lady Pamela stared at the girl as if doubting her own ears. "Your—lover?" Then she laughed.

So this was the secret of her young Sir Galahad! This the coat of mail about his heart that had kept him safe from other onslaughts. "Tokened to her"—this common, insignificant country girl. Was the boy mad? Or was his spirituality no deeper than masculine convenience demanded?

CALVARY

"I don't understand your uncouth Cornish expressions," she said sarcastically. "But I suppose you mean the ordinary 'walking out' and 'keeping company' of servant maids and villagers?"

"David and I have loved each other since the time we were boy and girl," said Ruth. "Some day we shall be wedded."

She blushed softly as the word passed her lip. As yet it had been sacred to her own heart. But some instinct of jealous fear resented the intrusion of these fashionable ladies into David's affairs, and she safeguarded them by her own.

Lady Pamela bit her lip and took counsel of prudence. Her heart was aflame with jealousy, with wounded pride. To be scorned, set aside from his life, and for such a rival! Yet this girl knew where he was, and her heart had ached for news of him these two months past—months when she had thrown herself into every resource of fashionable dissipation; months when she had been "on guard," as it were, for fear of her husband's threats; skating, as ever, over thinnest ice, but for once careful that no crack should betray that fleet passage.

And there had never been a word from David.

The fever of expectance had burnt within her like a consuming fire. Absence and silence gave to that brief passion of hers a certain stability and a certain pain that kept it constantly alive in her thoughts. Why would he not send some word, some message? Surely—surely—he had not been ice to that sudden fire! He *must* have thought of that scene in the dusk of the oratory; must have remembered her wild confession, her sobs and kisses, and her feigned despair.

And yet—just as she had skilfully worked her way to discovery of his whereabouts, she was confronted by this most commonplace impediment. This girl claimed him—openly, shamelessly—by right of that absurd thing, a promise of wedlock; a tokening or betrothal.

Like ice her words fell on Ruth's ears. "I should imagine you are placing a very wrong construction on a boy-and-girl intimacy. Mr. David, though we cannot learn his parentage, is infinitely superior to *you*. A great career

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is opening to him. You best know how far you could advance his social position, or help him to uphold it."

Ruth's cheek paled suddenly. Something in the harshness and cruelty of the words hurt her sensitive heart.

"He has said nothing of such things to me, my lady," she said. "He will return here to take up his ministry; here where he is loved and known the whole country over. Or, if his faith has changed——"

But she broke down at that. The idea was too terrible. It voiced a fear that had never left her since that April night on the cliffs. But Lady Pamela caught eagerly at the suggestion. *If his faith had changed?* That possibly meant an entire alteration of promises and conditions.

With an effort she schooled her voice to indifference. "Well then, Mrs. Perryn, since we can arrive at no definite results, we won't take up your time any longer. Still—if we might have that address?"

"Of course 'ee can, my lady!" exclaimed Rachel apologetically. "Ruth, child, will 'ee get the letter, an' tell the lady where David's gone? She only wants the name o' the furrin' place 'e's staying to."

Reluctantly, Ruth went away and up the steep stairs to her little bedroom. She opened a drawer and took out David's last letter. Very brief it was and not very ardent, but oh! how inestimably precious to that faithful heart. She felt she could not trust it to other eyes, least of all to those angry, insolent ones of Lady Pamela's.

She took a pair of scissors and cut off the address, which ran into three lines. Then she replaced the letter in its envelope and returned to the parlour. She handed the slip of paper to Lady Silchester, but Pamela made a fierce snatch at it. She read the address, folded up the paper, and put it in the jewelled bag hanging from her wrist.

"Thank you," she said briefly. "Now, Aunt Thusa, let us go. Picard will be tired of waiting."

Lady Silchester rose. She had been feeling slightly uneasy; she did not like Pamela's openly betrayed anger. Why was she so concerned about this young Methodist? For, after all, he was that and nothing else, as far as could be ascertained. She opened her purse and took out a sovereign, but Rachel Perryn drew back from the proffered hand.

CALVARY

"Oh, no, my lady! I cudn't take money for tellin' 'ee my dear lad's story. Ye're welcome eno'. An' good day, an' thank ye all the same."

She curtsied respectfully. Lady Silchester put the money back with unfeigned surprise.

"What extraordinary beings these Cornish people are!" she said to her niece as the motor bore them back to Helston. "I never remember having a tip refused in all my life till to-day."

"Well, we didn't learn much," said Lady Pamela. "As for that Squire Craddock, I never came across such a bear!"

Shut once more into his library, Craddock was fuming over an intrusion that had seemed to him both ill-bred and unwarrantable. Why couldn't they leave David alone? What right had they to pry and peer into the motives of his own mind? And what was the real secret of their interest?

Yet—why should he wonder? Did not David always arouse interest wherever he went? Was it not inseparable from his personality? Even he, callous infidel as he called himself, had been drawn at once to that bright and gracious boyhood; had grown to love him with an almost jealous love; was guarding in his own soul a terrible secret that might dash the boy's pure romanticism to the ground. And now others were on the track of his antecedents: these fashionable, curious women. One of them he instinctively distrusted. He knew her type—the modern *cocotte* of a decadent society; callous to dishonour; superb in her effrontery; merciless in her passions. Was her apparent interest in David the mask of some deeper feeling roused by his spiritual beauty, his extraordinary nature, and his indifference to her sex? These were attributes too novel to be unattractive, even to a *mondaine* like herself. Had there been anything between them during those weeks in London? David had betrayed nothing; but, then, he had spent a week in self-isolation after an abrupt departure. He had returned to Trebarwick strangely altered—serious, abstracted, older, too, in appearance; he had refused to take up the old mission of preaching; was reserved as to that time in town; had

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been only eager to leave England altogether! Some disturbing influence had undoubtedly been at work, and this unceremonious visit was Craddock's first clue to its origin. "Well, they didn't get much satisfaction out of me," he told himself grimly. "And I doubt if Rachel Perryn could give them more. All there was to learn from her I learnt long ago. Still, I may as well ascertain what she did let out."

He rang the bell, and then sent a message to the lodge asking Rachel to come round and see him. She arrived very soon, a little flustered and disturbed by the summons. She gave an accurate account of Lady Silchester's cross-examination, but when she reached the point of that inquiry for David's present address, the Squire started.

"You didn't give it? But, of course, you don't know?"

"I didn't know of et, sir; but Ruth, she'd had a letter from David last week. An' seein' the ladies was so anxious-like, I bade 'er give it 'em."

Craddock frowned. "I'm sorry for that. He didn't wish any of his fine London friends to know where he was. Does Ruth correspond with him?"

"If 'et means do they write letters to one another—yes, sir, they does. An' nat'ral eno', seein' they'm brought up together, boy an' maid, an' one day may be man an' wife."

"*What!*" exclaimed Craddock.

"Iss, sir; that's true. Ruth's cruel fond o' my lad, an' a better nor a sweeter maid there ain't to be found from 'ere to Land's End. That I know."

"I've nothing to say against little Ruth Pascoe," said the Squire. "But that there should be any foolishness of this sort going on—with David——"

"T'es very nat'ral foolishness, sir. Youth be drawn to youth, an' maid to man; an' from Scripture days onward they've loved, an' tokened, an' wedded. Why shouldn't David an' Ruth, ef so be they've a mind that way?"

Why shouldn't David and Ruth?

Long after he had dismissed Rachel Perryn the Squire sat in his big arm-chair, gazing blankly at the space before him, peopled by his own thoughts. David and Ruth. David—and Ruth.

Was that to be the end? The commonplace, everyday end of David's mysterious history? Surely not!

VI

DAVID had thrown aside care and responsibility and given himself up to the delights of travel, companioned by that one guide who had always made travel an interest and a delight.

Starting from Cherbourg, and idling delightfully through quaint Norman villages and old-world towns and places of historical interest, they reached Avranches, where they expected to find Godfrey St. Just. They learnt at the inn, however, that he had left several days before and was staying at Mont St. Michel.

It was but eighteen miles distant, and David was eager to start for it. But his companion restrained him.

"Not to-night, David; to-morrow. But I have promised myself to be the first to show you this Mount of wonder. Come with me."

They went out into the sunny street, and, leaving the town behind them, took the long, straight road vulgarized by steam trams and the exigencies of Cook's tours. David asked no questions. He noted that his companion's face wore the stern, absorbed look he had learnt to read as signal of disturbance. They seemed to have walked miles when he suddenly turned off from the main road and plunged into a wood. From out of its gloom and shade they emerged on high, rising ground, in turn climbing up to a tree-crowned eminence. From thence spread the whole lovely panorama of sea and river and islets that glorify this enchanting coast. Supreme above them all towered that mound of magical beauty, triple-crowned as fortress, abbey, prison—rising from out the blue of the sea in the glow of the sunset.

David caught his breath, then a low cry escaped him. "*My vision!*" he whispered breathlessly.

"I have often thought so. Its history fits your dream.

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The great Archangel Michael once descended on that Mount; once charged another saintly personage to perpetuate his glory. So says the legend. It has been crowned a sanctuary. Kings have sent their treasures thither, and popes and prelates have dowered it with saintly relics and memorials. Art and architecture have made it a world's wonder. Religion has enshrined it and by it been overthrown. Dynasties have threatened it with destruction, and armies stormed its granite portals. And yet—there it stands to-day in our sight. In *your* sight, my young visionary. Read its meaning; learn its lesson. My work is done!"

David started. Involuntarily his hand clasped that upraised arm.

"Why do you sadden this hour by hint of parting? Surely you can stay with us a little longer?"

"No, David. It has ceased to be 'you.' You said 'us' advisedly. He is there—your friend. He awaits you. I have brought you so far on your journey; lingered over it in jealous fear that it should end, as end it must."

"But not so soon?" implored the boy. "One day more! Stay with me just one day! Come *there*—to that wonderful Mount to-morrow!"

"No, David. My charge passes to other hands—to a new influence. Besides——"

He turned abruptly and pointed to where the spire, slender as a needle, stood up against the evening sky.

"Besides," he went on, "for me the place is desecrated. The glories of past centuries have left it stranded high and dry upon the inglorious bathos of modern utility. Mart and merchandise and village chaffering where knights and warriors have trod; where pomp and majesty of church ceremony have left undying record. Superstition still clasps it with failing strength; some record of sanctity still clings about its founder. Otherwise—it is but a grazing ground for sheep-like crowds, who think more of Poulet Ainé's omelettes than of the storied wonders that that Fortress holds!"

He turned abruptly and David reluctantly followed. Since parting threatened, every hour bore significance.

CALVARY

Later on that night the two strange comrades sat by the open window of the quaint old-world hostelry chosen as their resting-place. David again began to speak of the Mount. It obsessed his thoughts unaccountably. "You said no word of it. I wasn't prepared for anything so marvellous."

"So much the better. Yield to its charm. It must influence, it may even hurt you as Atheist and Rationalist have hurt. They won't be on a sliding scale—those new influences: somewhat abrupt and breathless in tendency. But such as they are, you must face them. On looking back on your days of visionhood and up to the present stage of disturbance you have met but ordinary forces; nothing that your own enthusiasm could not combat. But you will soon meet more subtle antagonists whose powers of persuasion and casuistry are only equalled by a merciless lust that spares no opponent. Strong men have trembled before that power, and kings bowed down to it. Once it ruled the world; now it fights with it. Fights—not by open warfare—straight, fair thrusts of combat, but by ignoble and underhand methods. Your tyrant is seldom scrupulous and never reasonable. Ah! my David, could you know as I have known, see what I have seen, behold the whole tragic panorama of Life unrolled to your horrified gaze, you might indeed ask: 'What God is this that men worship?' Is it not rather a semblance of their own evil passions, throned and set on high, as of old was set the Brazen Serpent?"

"May I ask you—something?" said David suddenly.

"Ask; but I don't promise an answer."

"It is only—if you would tell me in what *you* believe—yourself?"

The old whimsical light died out of the strange face.

"Ah, that is not easy to say, my David! Certainly not in creeds; certainly not in dogma; certainly not in surpliced hypocrites who 'for pretence make long prayers'! What do I believe? . . . That beneath all the vileness of the world, and all the false doctrines and heresies which consecrate Religion (save the mark!), some good yet lives. Some ideal points us God-wards. Is it that? Do I believe it? I—accursed and condemned that I am—hovering

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between Time and Eternity; watching the Ages pass as shadows in a pool, whose depths refuse me a grave!"

So sombre was his face, so strange his words, that David stared awestruck, wondering at the change in this gay comrade of past days.

Their window was open to the night and to a dark, clouded sky. A strange hush held all Nature mute, as if listening as the boy listened. No stir of leaf, nor human voice, nor human footstep came as relief to that awed stillness.

David's heart beat heavily with a sudden fear such as had touched him on first acquaintanceship. He did not speak. It would have seemed an intrusion on some isolated sanctuary of a suffering soul.

And then, slowly, pitilessly, as men speak in stress of awakened emotions, words fell into phrases. Strange and terrible they were.

"There is a knowledge too great for man; there is a truth too awful for his contemplation. There is a suffering he has never reached, even as there is a joy he cannot attain. Sorrows deep and immeasurable fence him from their realization. . . . Two mighty forces for ever wage their conflict for supremacy: evil and good, good and evil. True as night and day; as storm and calm; as life and death. . . . Tribal necessities have made races, and race after race has bred all that man claims as humanity. Love binds him with strange cords, and jealousy and hatred. He is born into conflict and confusion; he wakes to chaos and holds out entreating hands for guidance, and false guides crowd around, crying: 'Lo Here! or Lo There!' And so he runs his course as the sun his day, until the great sea draws him back into itself. A little love he may have won; a little good he may have achieved. For a little while his name may be remembered, and honoured with praise, and set on high in men's minds and memories. *That I have seen. In that I believe.* There are immortal instincts, too, re-born in man's soul from time to time lest, indeed, he should curse God and die in despair. And there are devils—horrible, hideous, self-destroying; things that tempt him to perdition. Smiling from women's eyes; lurking in the earth's prodigal gifts

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of wine and gold; tainting simple pleasures; turning honesty and honour into dark paths of self-aggrandizement. *In these I believe. For these I have seen.* And here and there some brighter skein is woven into the dark web of life—that strange and endless thing stretching from Eternity to Eternity; woven by the shuttle of Immortal Will; shot through with passion and desire, and blood and human torment, and sins too vile for utterance. Love it is that shines through these stained and tangled threads. Human love stretching to Divine. Divine love stooping to humanity. *In that I believe. For that I have seen.* And now——”

A sudden glare of lightning rent the sky, and following it came a thunder-clap so loud and startling that it seemed like a mightier voice challenging the one it had silenced.

David sprang to his feet. Involuntarily he glanced at the face of his companion. It looked strangely pale in the gloom of the coming storm, in the recurring play of the electric current that threw the room into spectral significance.

Again a crash of thunder rent the air, as if the mighty artillery of Heaven claimed space for its own battlefield; sounded defiance to man's puny nothingness.

David shivered, less with fear than with that curious unreasoning horror no mind can explain. Involuntarily he crept nearer the rigid figure that stood with folded arms looking up at the inky heavens. But suddenly a command stayed that impulse.

“Come no nearer, David! A message has reached me and I must obey. Too long have I tarried in peace, and tasted the joys of human love. Such things are not for me. Through all the changes and chances of Time, vainly do I seek rest and peace, and the common gift of Death. Like the mirage of the desert, they mock and then elude me. Search your soul and your memory and the memory of all time, yet you shall not find a sadder fate than mine. *That, David, I believe; for that I have known!*”

As he spoke, the room was filled with a blinding glare. It forced David to retreat. Involuntarily he closed eyes and ears as that terrific artillery again thundered its awful

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battle-cry. When he removed his hands and looked up, he was alone.

The rain swept down with the force of a released torrent. Great sheets of water spread themselves between earth and sky. All the elements of storm were let loose, and the air was filled with their fierce riot.

Terror-struck, David threw himself on the couch, trying to shut out the deafening uproar. Never had he witnessed such a storm. It seemed as if the very earth quaked and shook to its foundations. Then, suddenly as it had begun, it ceased. One last peal of thunder rolled, slow and sullen, to the verge of distance; died out into silence. One last tremulous flicker of lightning illumined the darkness of the horizon. The rain grew softer, lighter; then, as if a veil had been lifted, the whole sky, moonlit and starlit, shone down upon the silent earth. Full and glorious the moon swept to her throne and gathered her court around her. Tumult was lost in peace. Some voice had breathed command, and Nature had obeyed.

David staggered to his feet and went over to the open window, gazing with wild eyes at the beautiful scene.

In his soul still lurked the fear that had seized it so brief a while before. *Who* had been his companion? *Who* had spoken those mysterious words? *Who* was it that had left him suddenly, without farewell, to face that awful tempest—to vanish in the blackness of the night? *Who*?

His heart grew chill with terror. He tried to pray, but no words came. He seemed to have lost will, power, speech; everything but that sense of intolerable loneliness, of fear mute and inexpressible. For once he faced life as a dreamer awakened from long sleep faces the realization of some newly happened tragedy. Life—the far distant, the far reaching. Life—that mysterious web he had heard described as “stretching from Eternity to Eternity, woven by the shuttle of Immortal Will.” Life—through whose stained entanglements one thread alone shone bright and pure; the little silver thread of Love.

God held it. Man alone tried to knot and gnarl it into base patterns of his own design; to twist it from the guiding Hand. But the Hand was at once too wise and

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too strong to let it go. Love—human love that stretched to the Divine; Divine love that stooped to sad humanity.

He looked down into the depths of his own heart. What did it hold of this great gift? Was not his web of life shot through with selfishness and thanklessness? He had deemed himself chosen for a great mission; set apart for a wondrous purpose. How had he fulfilled them?

"Oh, but I will—I *will*!" his tortured soul cried passionately. "God, give me strength. Save my drowning faith and lift it to Thyself; to Thy high throne of grace and love, where alone is safety!"

Full day and sunshine, and the sea a great wide circle of glassy calm. Very fair and lovely the scene looked, with the crowning majesty of that wondrous Mount rising to the blue of the radiant heavens. David's soul was filled with the beauty of it all. Even the commonplaceness of his journey thither could not penetrate into the charmed peace that wrapped him once more in vision.

At the end of the Causeway, a tall, slight figure, dressed in priest's cassock and low, flat hat, was awaiting him. It was Godfrey St. Just.

Eagerly David sprang forward, his hands outstretched to greet his boyhood's friend. But something of his ardour was chilled by the gravity and austerity of the young man. He looked worn and aged beyond his years. His eyes had lost the eagerness of youth and held something sad, something furtive. They were the eyes of one who has learnt much, suffered much, and must suppress much.

The first greeting over, they turned and walked up the rugged, stony street.

"I am staying here," said Godfrey, "and I have taken a room for you. I thought we would have a quiet week together before going through Brittany. I am bent on a pilgrimage to all the famous abbeys. Will that interest you?"

"I am sure it will," said David. "How wonderful this is! Far more wonderful than our Cornish Mount."

"Naturally. Think of its age, its history. We need not hurry ourselves as do most sightseers who come here, so we shall be able to assimilate more of its significance.

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By the way, are you quite alone? Our friend Craddock not with you?"

"No," said David, "I am alone now. Yesterday I had a companion, but he has departed with the usual want of ceremony."

"What—the Wanderer?"

"No other."

"Is he as mysterious as ever?"

"Quite," said David briefly. He could not bring himself to impart what had happened the previous night; not until he knew this strange Godfrey a little better.

"Perhaps you'd like to look round?" said St. Just presently. "It is very beautiful, and we have it to ourselves in the early mornings before the tourists begin to arrive. What an infernal nuisance cheap excursions have become! They've destroyed the charm of all the beautiful ancient places where one might sit and dream of the past and rebuild the future by light of it. However, we'll have a try. I know the custodian here well. He will show us more than Messrs. Cook and Gaze are likely to have time or inclination for."

David glanced at his friend's face, a little struck by the measured tone and formal phrases he used. It seemed as if he weighed his words before uttering them. They had none of the old spontaneous, boyish joy. But he soon forgot all else in his delight at the wonders before him.

They first visited the Salle d'Aumones, that great bare, stony place with its massive columns and arched roof; the place where in ancient times mendicants had assembled to receive alms and assistance. The guide showed them the great wheel that had been used for drawing up water and stores from the foot of the cliff. He told them also of the spring of pure water revealed to the original founder of the abbey by the Archangel Michael.

"That happened in seven hundred and nine," said Godfrey. "Picture it, David. And we modern gapers hearing of it in this nineteenth century!"

Then they visited the famous Salle des Chevaliers commenced by Raoul des Isles in the twelfth century—a work of five years; famous because of the French King who

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first founded the Order of St. Michael. All its splendour of sculptured stalls and heraldic insignia had been destroyed in the great Revolution, when most things beautiful and memorable were sacrificed to the rabid ferocity for destruction.

The two friends then wandered to the cloister, that marvellous gem of architecture. Then Godfrey dismissed their guide. "That's enough for to-day," he said to David. "We'll go out on the ramparts and look at the view."

The afternoon drifted by in lazy wanderings. They sailed over the bay and saw the island of Tourbelaine, couched like a lion amongst its treacherous sandbanks. They viewed the magic Mount from all sides. To David it seemed always a wonder; from its topmost point of bristling pinnacles to its wider level of monastic and military structure, its dark, crooked streets, and ramparts and roofs.

Godfrey had taken rooms in one of the apartment houses overlooking the bay. Expenses were to be shared between the two friends as long as their tour lasted.

As night drew on they sat on the little balcony, sometimes talking, oftener silent. For the spell of the place was upon them, and both were satisfied just to gaze and dream and drink in the lovely peace of it all. To David the strangest thing about the Mount was its likeness to his vision. Here stood that mighty Figure, the great Archangel. He of the Sword and the Dragon, wondrous as Lucifer, Son of the Morning; but, unlike him, one who had not fallen from his high estate.

The old spell of dreamy mysticism again enveloped him. He felt drawn back into profounder depths, yet conscious of clearer vision. New forces were at work within his soul. He neither combated nor resisted them. It seemed to him that a time had come when he must just "stand and wait"; listen for the message, yet not hasten its arrival; command his soul in patience and be still.

But Godfrey was less calm than his friend. He felt as if the time had come to open out his heart: so much, at least, as it seemed fit to open, or reveal. He waited on

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David's questioning, knowing it was bound to come; half eager for it, and yet half afraid of its frank penetration into dark nooks and crannies he had himself avoided.

Then at last David's eyes turned from the quiet mystery of the moonlit sea to that troubled face by his side.

"Ah, Godfrey," he said, "it seems but the other day we talked and boasted of what we should make of our lives! So far—mine has but held a prelude. Now it's a struggle to find even one glimmer of true light amongst the myriad will-o'-the-wisps that confuse it. So for a space I have laid all aside save thought and prayer, and one burning, earnest desire to be shown the Truth, that I may in turn show it to others. That is my history. What is yours?"

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VII

“WHAT is yours?”

The eyes of the two friends met. Only four years—yet what a change in each! But that in Godfrey St. Just was the most remarkable. For as he looked into his schoolmate's eyes a veil seemed withdrawn from his own. He forgot that he had intended to act a part. It suddenly seemed as if relief awaited him in confession. Some of the natural *camaraderie* of past boyhood swept over the barriers of restraint. He leant forward and, resting his arms on the balustrade of their little balcony, began to speak.

“I'll tell you everything, David. It will do me good. I—I hadn't meant to, for you still look as if you had kept your clean record; half a saint, as we used to call you. But I— Well, you shall judge for yourself. I must go back to that time when I went away to the mountains with Giovanni Bari. You remember him? I think you disliked him.”

“I did, and do,” said David. “I felt he would have a bad influence upon you. As it was, he spoilt our friendship.”

“I had a purpose in that intimacy. I wanted to learn some of the secrets of the Romish priesthood—at once the most difficult and dangerous of discoveries. I did learn—something. The usual veil of enchantment was thrown over it. I felt the fascination; the unholy curiosity attending forbidden rites and ceremonies. I pretended to their faith. I even went to Confession in strange chapels where the priest was as unknown to me as I to him. Bari told me enough to help the cheat. But I did not count it wrong, for I was, as you know, an enthusiast for ritual. But, after a time, I grew alarmed. It does not do to play with fire. Besides, I found out how corrupt and dangerous a companion Bari was. I left him abruptly. He was

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just about to enter a seminary in Umbria, to train for the priesthood. I came back to England and went to my people, and insisted on their helping me to complete my studies. I spent three years at Oxford. There I learnt how deep and subtle a thing was the new Jesuitical spirit at work within the citadel of Christian Faith. But yet its charm was undoubted. Newman and Froude and Pusey and many others whose names were not openly revealed had been all banded in a Secret Society; united in a conspiracy to undermine evangelical union and hand the Church of England over to the See of Rome. And mind you, David, so strong was the case of these men, so powerful the arguments of their successors, that I became convinced it was the best and wisest thing to do. Not I only—scores, dozens of the students of Divinity. Many of them were Jesuits—unacknowledged; sent to the English Universities to influence the minds of those studying for Holy Orders. I could tell you much of that time; much of what I went through, for my ardour made me at once marked, and I was drawn into one of the foremost Ritualistic sets. God above! what tricks were played with our consciences! How attractive the office of priesthood was made; how the *power* of it, the honour of it, the subtle undermining strength of it, was painted for our young ambitions! And then the doctrines of the Mass; the Reservation of the Sacrament; the sweet and sensuous influences of the Confessional; the charm of fair penitents; of dallying with vice by suggestion so that bodily impurity might be atoned for by spiritual penance! I could fill volumes with the fruit of those years! But then I only revelled in their dangers and enjoyed the unveiling of their secrets. Power meant so much to me. And—*is there any power in all the world to be compared with that of man's will over the souls of his fellow-men?* None—none. Otherwise Popes and Cardinals, and Archbishops and Bishops, and priests and prelates of all the thousand and one creeds and sects that claim their arrogant rights would long since have sought other offices and other dignities! . . . David, I am telling you this in bitterness of soul; for I feel myself a renegade and a traitor even to speak of such things!”

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"But why? Surely you have not taken Orders and then——"

"Then dishonoured them? No, David—not yet; though hundreds of men in the Church to-day have done, and are doing it."

"But—this dress?" said David, touching the cassock and girdle that had seemed so significant.

"I am entitled to wear it if I choose. It is, indeed, scarcely different from our College dress at St. Blasius. However, *that* belongs to a later period. I left Oxford in a confused and uncertain state of mind. I then went to Paris. I had been told of a Retreat, near Charenton, where young English priests and laymen often retired for meditation, or for the better study of Romish technicalities. All these things were managed for us very cleverly. We were taught the sacrament of Penance; the obligations of Confession; all the underlying mysteries of that Society which has recently become notorious. Yet with all this my determination to enter the priesthood still held good; only my mind hovered perpetually between the easier doctrines of Ritualism, and the sterner tyrannies of Rome. Then one day a mad impatience seized me. I was young; I was a man; I had a lifetime before me! Why should I spend it in penance and self-torment? Why deny myself the joys natural to my age and sex? In a moment of wild excitement I threw aside my garb and rules of priesthood, and sought in Paris what Paris knows only too well how to give. I tasted joys of wild dissipation, of worldly pleasures; I gave myself to the worship of the senses: to natural instincts from which I had once shrunk in terror or disgust. I saw the life of austerity only in the light of a monstrous self-torture—a hateful Puritanism. I threw aside intellectual joy and drank my fill of common earthly pleasures. I loved, or thought I loved, a woman who tricked me, fooled me, deserted me. I was taken up and made much of by a rich old libertine whom I came across in a gambling hell in Montmartre. He gave me an entrance into a certain section of society—brilliant, pleasure-loving, immoral, as Paris society is, at the core. Oh, I had my money's worth, David! Read, learnt, and inwardly digested many things of which your innocent mind hasn't

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even dreamt. Then—just as suddenly as that madness seized me—so it left. I woke one day, sober, sane; disillusionized, disgusted. I came back to England. I had won a large sum of money at the gaming-table, and with that to keep me going I turned my attention to a new spiritual excitement—the studying of Religious Forms in various churches. Every Sunday or Saint's Day found me in a different place of worship. And, dear God above! how many there are! And all *right*, and all believing in themselves. Oh, David, why has not some one painted the Tragedy of Sects! Painted it in written words, or burning verse, or limned it with the painter's undying art! What I saw, what I heard in all those wandering months! And then, one Sunday morning, I found myself in a little shabby chapel in Soho. I listened for fifteen minutes to the simple eloquence of a frail old man. So earnest he was, so purely eloquent, that I grew abashed and penitent, and all my soul cried out for pardon for this past awful time. David, in the dusk of that same day I crept back to the little chapel and knelt at the Confessional, and I poured out all my sins and heresies and backslidings to that gentle confessor. And peace came to me again, for we grew to be friends, and he helped me as no other of his order or mine had ever done. Then one night I did what Newman did, what Wiseman did, what hundreds of doubting, terrorized, perplexed souls are doing every day. I threw myself into the arms of the Church I had been told was the one and only True Treasurer of Christ's mysteries. I vowed myself to Rome!"

There was a moment's breathless silence. David broke it with an incredulous murmur. "Godfrey—are you in earnest? Have you counted the cost?"

"To the uttermost farthing," he said. "I cannot trust myself. I cannot find peace. If I belonged to the English advanced Church I should only be halting between two opinions. It would mean a miserable subterfuge—taking the honours and the pay of the established order and falsifying its doctrines. Mind you, David, I don't say Rome is *right*. I am not blind to the abuses that have crept into her services and defiled her sanctuaries. But she helped me—somehow. That is the

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truth. I have been into hell; the hell of doubt and distortion of Faith and sectarian quibbles. I am sick to death of them all! It is Rome, or Atheism. I must believe all—or nothing. My pilot assures me of safety and of peace. Well, I trust my pilot. If he assumes the Divinity of Christ or the sanctity of a Père François——”

David started, “François—Père François! Is it he who has converted you?”

“Do you know him?”

David related that meeting in the Cathedral; the old priest's invitation. He had forgotten all about it until he heard the name. How strange it was! How it narrowed the world and its circles, and brought individual lives to a common meeting-ground!

Père François: the kindly, gentle old priest who had asked him to come to his sanctuary if in trouble. Well, surely *he* was no Jesuit. He would not have tempted Godfrey's tortured soul by untruths or sophistries. Keener grew his interest in his friend's recital. He leant forward and looked eagerly into the troubled face lit by the clear rays of the moon.

“Ah, Godfrey, this is very strange!” he said. “That same Père François came to me at a crisis of my spiritual life. I was under the spell of a very dangerous influence. Tell me, have you ever heard of a man called Stephen Ormiston?”

“Of course I have! A very unorthodox sort of cleric? Preaching a kind of glorified rationalism? Attracts an enormous following—mostly women?”

“The description suits. Well, he engaged me to preach a series of Lenten lectures in his church in London last March.”

“You! Nonsense, David! Why, you're not ordained!”

“We Nonconformists have our own form of ordination, and I had preached in Cornwall nearly four years. Ormiston heard me there. He would not take ‘no.’ So I went to London. I stayed with him, and for four Sunday evenings I preached or lectured, whichever you choose to call it, to a congregation of worldly, fashionable people—to whom their souls were of infinitely less value than their bodies!”

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"I wish I had known. I'd have come to hear you. It must have been a strange experience?"

"It was. I broke away at last. I couldn't fulfil my agreement. Ormistoun was a second, or rather worse, edition of Squire Craddock. He completed what the other had begun."

"Ormistoun is a corrupter of youth, if ever there was one!" exclaimed Godfrey. "He is well known. A very dangerous influence for you, David. How far has the harm gone?"

"Far enough!" exclaimed David bitterly. "I scarcely know now what I *do* believe. Certainly I should not know what to teach. Craddock is almost an infidel. I can never imagine what made him adopt me or interest himself in my training."

"Spiritual curiosity—the most fascinating form of intellectual analysis. But tell me more of Ormistoun. He has made his mark; he is an adept in unorthodox evasions. Why he is permitted to turn his church into a semi-theatrical exhibition I cannot imagine. Have you enrolled yourself as his disciple? If so, you are in worse hands than myself."

"No," said David. "I left him and I left London, and now I have resolved to take myself to task and go right down into the depths of the matter: what I believe and *why* I believe? These two questions must be answered to my satisfaction, or else——"

"Yes?"

"I shall know myself unworthy. These failings of doubt, these strayings into vague paths by the feeble torchlight of man's guidance, these I must crush—or for ever renounce my mission."

"How sure you were of that mission—once!"

"And what of yourself, Godfrey?"

"My attraction was chiefly that of sensuous ritual. It is still."

"After all you've seen and learnt and heard? I can't imagine you a Catholic priest, Godfrey."

"Can you imagine me a monk? That tempts me even more. To shut out the world; forgo its vanities and dangers; clasp sanctity to my heart instead of an earthly

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mistress ; live for prayer and renunciation ; torture my body to redeem my soul."

"Has not Christ done that for us ? Does He ask man to repeat His sacrifice ?"

"Man would believe that if he might cease to sin. But the world is as vile as ever, and man as tempted as ever, and Peace and Heaven are only a spiritual mirage, for ever beckoning us, for ever eluding us !"

"Do you say these things to Père François ?"

"Of course I do. He knows all the weakness of my soul ; the doubts of my mind. It is he who has sent me for these months of quiet travel, beseeching me to leave books alone and pray unceasingly ; to study the Faith as I see it exemplified in Catholic countries, at Catholic shrines. I am commencing *here*." He glanced up at the clear sky, then down at the shining waters. "The charm of the place captivated me : all a wonder, and half a dream ; a sanctuary deserted ; a place to draw one's thoughts to peace and prayer—these cloisters, that chapel of Hildebert, that sombre crypt. Well, perhaps you are less monastical than myself. I confess I am drawn to these things very strongly."

"But monasticism has always seemed to me such an unnatural life !" exclaimed David. "Selfish, too, and useless. Prayers and penances and renunciations don't help the outer sufferers—the poor, the sick, the needy."

"But the brethren *do* help the outside world. Their charities are world-renowned. And they work hard too, fulfilling all menial and necessary duties as well as those of their order and their faith."

"You have no doubt studied the subject. I have not. Only it seems to me that so great a movement as that of the Reformation was only called into action because of the abuses that had crept into those very orders. Monkhood and priesthood had assumed an intolerable arrogance. It seems a pity, after accepting freedom, to put one's neck into the yoke again."

"Freedom is a delusion, David. There is no such thing. All mankind are slaves to some force, secular or spiritual—it matters not which. We cannot act, think, speak, without feeling that we are restrained in some way, by some

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means. Our actions involve other fates as well as our own, and for peace or for prudence' sake we check them by Laws and Conventions. It is the same with speech. And our thoughts—are they free? Are they not also swayed by what we see and hear and read, as well as by what we experience? You know they are. We can't even tell *why* we think: whence comes the power that forms thought or controls it? Science formulates results from given causes. Can Science tell *who* creates the cause? Psychology, too, is a shallow conception of incomprehensibilities. Is there one thing in Life as we know it that is *absolutely* reliable? Only Death. If we are cursed with life, we cannot escape life's penalty—its end."

"Thinking like this, do you expect to be any happier in the self-immolation of a monastery?" exclaimed David.

"Happier? No; I don't believe in happiness. It is a passing emotion, like any other; a more exalted form of selfishness, but still—selfishness. Brief pleasures make existence possible, else would the world be an open grave for suicides; but at the best they are only brief."

"Oh, Godfrey, you are terrible!"

"Am I? Don't blame me for it. I didn't make myself. I didn't ask *to be*. Would to God I had had the chance! . . . But that is another wrong. Unknowing, unwilling, we are sent into a world to find out we hate it, and are the worse for being in it, and yet cannot evade its burden of existence. But there, David, I have talked enough. Still, it was as well to commence our new friendship with a wholesale confession. Perhaps we'll be the better for it to-morrow."

He rose and pushed back his chair. A straight and austere young figure under the bright moon-rays. David looked up at him wistfully. Could this be the boy he had known and loved and confided in? Who had been brimming over with youth and youth's enthusiasms but four years ago?

Oh! what cruel fate was driving them both to the brink of this precipice of Doubt?

It yawned at their feet; almost it invited some desperate plunge into veiled obscurity. Out of it came nothing but torment. Could there be a worse thing to face in the Beyond?

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VIII

DAVID paced his room to and fro the whole night through. Sleep was impossible; burning thoughts crowded his brain. Into his heart had crept strange temptings, strange disillusion. The flesh stirred and warred against the spirit. How true it was what Godfrey had said! They were both young; they were men; there was a lifetime before them, and here they were bent on self-immolation: the martyrdom of the body for the good of the soul.

And how did they *know* that the soul was worth the martyrdom? Millions upon millions of human beings had tasted life and known death. Who amongst them had ever come back to say what Death *meant*? Whether it was the gate to a new and better life? If the Paradise of Saints and Angels was anything more than a dream of visionaries or fanatics? This life, at least, was real—was human; it had an intelligible form and substance. But the other—barred by Death's grim horrors and used as the terrorism of fighting sects for the saving of souls—who could positively and certainly declare that it existed at all?

He threw himself into a chair beside the open window and pressed his hands against his burning eyes, and as he sat he passed in review the Religions of the world.

Like an endless procession they marched down the pathway of Time.

The false gods of Egypt; the tenacious faiths of Buddhism and Mohammedanism; the ritual of Jew and Greek; the mythology of Paganism and Pantheism grafted on to Christianity. Then the teaching of one simple Holy Life branching out again into all the tortuous channels of man's invention. The early Christians; the Romish Church founded on the dogma of Apostolic Succession—that unbroken line which, if sanctified by Divine grace, had

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assuredly produced terrible examples of crime and error ! Monasticism, priesthood, iron-handed supremacy that had set the Holy Inquisition on high as a mark of never-to-be-forgotten degradation ; a thing to make all religion abhorrent if religion masked such brutal tyranny. Onward again the Great Procession swept ; rebuked by kingly authority ; crushed down by temporal power. Again to rise, again to enthral humanity ; spreading kinder and more helpful doctrines now : the purer faiths of Protestantism ; the abolition of saintly idols such as drew Romanist worshippers to chapel and shrine. Then the severe creeds of Calvinists and Puritans ; the ordered forms of Episcopalianism ; the alliance under evangelical principles. The manifold sects of Non-conformity into which even orthodox Christianity had split itself, Presbyterianism, Calvinism, Methodism—all fighting for the true principles of their Founder. And then crept forward the sensuous hypocrisies of the Ritualist ; the modern craze for something new and strange ;—Theosophy, Spiritualism, Christian Science with its fallacies, that yet held some underlying truths. Mormonism, Zionism. The great trumpetings of sensational missionizers sweeping weak-minded sinners off their feet to some promised Glory Land of Safety !

Against these stood the calm, stolid antagonism of the Agnostic ; the Unitarian tenets of the Theist ; the ever-recurring strife of Theology and Philosophy pitted against Science ; the Atheist such as Craddock ; the clerical Rationalist such as Ormistoun, giving stones for bread, and trying to make hard facts appeal as the tender doctrines of Christ's love and sacrifice had once appealed.

There the Procession ended so far as his experience could follow it. Stunned and bewildered, he lifted his head and looked up at the breaking dawn. The shadows of night had gone ; the last pale stars were gleaming in a space of mystery. To the east a shimmer of gold showed against the grey horizon. He knelt beside the open window and watched that never-ending miracle—the Birth of Day.

Before him rolled the sea, calm and still in this land-locked bay. He could hear the soft beating of its restless heart, the plaint of its ceaseless song. Again, as of

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old, the charm and the spell of it enthralled his senses : those wide spaces of water that looked so free and yet were prisoned by an unknown power ; some force against which it was useless to rebel. As he looked the sun burst forth from its panoply of clouds. A million golden spears seemed to pierce the mists of dawn, and all the glory of the new day shone over sea and land.

The New Day—the ever-constant promise of life's continuity.

Awed and silenced by a majesty none can explain, the boy watched the great miracle of Life. For in that mighty orb is life ; the life of the earth, of Nature, of humanity. But from whence does it draw its own life ? its own magnitude of glory ? Is it not from some mightier source, some greater Power than itself ?

Smaller and meaner things passed from out his mind. At least there was God—that over-ruling, stupendous, incomprehensible Being, Author and Creator of the Universe and of this complex limited humanity.

God ? And man—poor, puny, mortal—questioned, doubted, denied Him.

His eyes were rivetted on that glorious orb. His soul seemed to float outwards and lose itself in a burning whirl of immensities ; something too vast and wonderful for comprehension. Dazzled and bewildered, he let himself drift, as it were, into a cloud of hazy memories. Past and future mingled. Once again from some heaven-uplifted height the glorious figure of that great Archangel bent towards him, and touched his breast with its flashing sword. At the touch his spirit seemed to swoon. Darkness covered his senses ; the radiance of sea and sky faded into whirling mists. Then the sudden swell of music reached his ears. Glorious and glad it rose as if from the depths of some vast sanctuary. Gradually the mists cleared, and he saw himself standing before an altar in a vast stone building. Massive arches reared themselves on either side, laced and interlaced with the magical grace of Gothic art. From out a mystic violet light shone a silver altar, above which spread the guardian wings of a mighty angel. Rose and gold and amber mingled as the penetrating sun poured through the stained-glass windows. All its lovely illu-

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mination fell upon the altar and upon the Figure. Then, in measured cadence, swelled and rose a chant of praise and supplication.

He fell on his knees before the shining altar, and it seemed to him his own voice caught the phrases and echoed them.

"O Prince Céleste, glorieux Saint Michel, vous surpassiez en gloire tous les esprits immortels dont vous êtes le plus parfait. . . ."

With a sudden start David awoke. The words of the chanted prayer were still ringing in his ears; the semblance of that mighty Figure still in his memory. Day had fully come, and all his little bare room was full of light.

He felt dazed and bewildered, only conscious of an extraordinary fatigue. He threw himself on the bed and immediately fell asleep.

"Why, David—David—what a sluggard! It's nine o'clock, and we were to visit the Église Abbaticale at eight. I looked in, but you were sleeping so soundly I didn't like to waken you. But why on earth are you *dressed*?"

David stared confusedly at the speaker. Then he sat up. "I didn't go to bed at all," he said. "I remember sitting by the window till daybreak, and then——"

The memory of his strange dream came to him. He rose and stretched his stiff limbs and looked at Godfrey's surprised face.

"I suppose I dreamt it," he went on.

"Dreamt what?"

"No matter. I'll tell you when my wits are clear. Let me wash and dress again. I'll feel fresher."

"Well, I'll give you twenty minutes. Then you'll find coffee and *petit pains* in our *salon*. It's a glorious morning. But I want to avoid the tourist crowd; that's why I said we'd be early. The guide is ready at eight o'clock, but he goes off at eleven. The midday officials always wait to collect a crowd, and one is so hurried that all the pleasure's gone."

David made his appearance in the time agreed. They

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had their coffee and rolls sitting just within the little balcony where they had talked the previous night.

"Isn't it an enchanting place?" said Godfrey St. Just. "At every point there's beauty. Be thankful you're not bound to 'rush' it all, as most people do. I could spend weeks here and never weary. By the way, as you came from Avranches, I suppose you did the usual 'sights'? The place where Henry the Second did penance for the murder of Thomas à Beckett?"

"No," said David. "To tell you the truth, I know nothing about the place except that we were to meet you there. I was taken to a hill some miles out, where I saw this Mount of St. Michel rising like a fairy cathedral from the sea. Nothing can eclipse that memory. Besides, according to the à Beckett story, Henry was compelled to do penance for a crime that he was obliged to swear he had never committed. It sounds somewhat paradoxical, doesn't it?"

"Put like that—yes. But if his hands were free from blood, his conscience accused him of being an 'accessory to the fact.' So the absolution did him no harm."

"And you will have to declare that you believe in all these things, Godfrey," exclaimed David. "In the power of the Church of Rome to excommunicate and to pardon; to bind and loose; to award Heaven or Hell. How can you!"

Godfrey shrugged his shoulders. "We won't discuss the technical points of faith, if you don't mind, David. Let it all rest for a time. I've gone through a great deal; so have you. After a storm comes a calm; let us pretend we are travelling through some dream-country wherein all possible faiths are illumined by one Central Light—the Light of Calvary. It will meet us here on every side. God alone knows where it will lead."

David was silent. After his own prolonged mental struggle, the thought of calm and peace was sweet enough. And Light—the Light that shone from out that emblem of Eternal Sacrifice and Eternal Love, could only lead to Heaven.

When their simple breakfast was finished the two friends strolled out, and Godfrey secured his special cicerone.

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Very few people had come over from the mainland as yet, and when they entered the Eglise Abbatiale it was almost deserted.

As David stood and gazed around he gave a faint exclamation. "Why, I know it all! *I have been here*—and yet—I have never been. How could I?"

He pressed his hands to his eyes; everything seemed to swim around him, for he stood where he had stood in his dream: before the silver altar, under the flying arches, and *there*—surely—must stand also the Winged Archangel, holding on high his flashing sword; treading under his mailed heel the Dragon of Evil.

"What is it? What is the matter?" asked Godfrey.

David glanced confusedly from place to place.

"It was such a strange feeling, as if I had been here and seen everything. There—in that transept a statue should be standing——"

"So there is!" exclaimed Godfrey.

"Is it that of the Archangel?"

"Of course. But you have heard of it?"

"Never!" said David earnestly. "You know I only came here yesterday, and we did not see this part of the building at all. But it all seems quite familiar. Do they hold services here? I seem to have heard a great organ, and voices, and a hymn. I could almost repeat it; it begins: '*O Prince céleste, glorieux Saint Michel*——'"

"*Mais, Monsieur, c'est la prière des pénitents!*" exclaimed the old custodian. "*Voilà!* It is there—printed. I show you."

He took a little paper book from his pocket and turned over the pages.

"But there! Let monsieur read for himself. He is *très bon Catholique*, I doubt not."

David took the book. It was a printed service of hymns, litanies, and prayers; all in honour of the patron saint of the edifice.

He looked at Godfrey. "I must have dreamt it, I suppose? It is all here, and it seems perfectly familiar. Yet why should it be so?"

"Monsieur has perhaps had a visit of dreams," said the old guide, who spoke some English. "He is specially

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blest. But strange things happen here ! The pilgrims, the poor sick ones, the sad and suffering, they have received great blessings. Our good Saint Michel, he is all charity and loving kindness. Let monsieur be proud of himself thus to be favoured ; it is long since one heard of a vision. Our great saint, he shows not himself any longer, seeing his shrine has been dishonoured, and those who come—the careless ones of the world yonder—they do not think how sacred is this spot ; only that it is curious.”

But David had turned aside, and was standing in the transept gazing with rapt eyes at the Figure of the Archangel.

Even as in those two visions its majestic beauty shone upon his dazzled senses. As he gazed a great awe stole over his soul. He felt impelled to kneel ; to murmur once again that vow of his childhood ; to beseech forgiveness for broken faith ; to cast aside all that hateful burden of doubt and throw himself on the breast of some great mastering Power that engulfed heart, soul, reason, his very life, his very self in a flood of passionate ecstasy. Had he found the Truth ? Had he seen the Light ? Were his feet set once more in the straight and narrow path, so hard to tread ?

He rose from his knees and rejoined Godfrey, who was praying before the high altar. David waited patiently, wondering if, after all, his friend was wiser than himself.

He had cast all self-conflict aside ; he had secured a Pilot.

They resumed their pilgrimage, both very silent. Godfrey was wrapped in meditations, and David could but think of the strange fulfilment of his dream. Surely there was purpose here ; a meaning he had yet to learn.

He remembered what the Wanderer had said. New influences were awaiting him, and they would be rapid, abrupt, startling. Truly the prediction had been verified. The events of the past day and night, that scene through which he had just passed, were on no gradual scale. They had come as a series of shocks, startling him out of his self-promised peace.

Succeeding hours and days still found the two friends in this charmed spot, haunting its aisles and chapels, its halls, and crypt, and galleries.

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To the ordinary tourist who gives a few hours, at most a day, to Mont St. Michel, little is known of its storied wealth of legend, history, association; of the charm of varied architecture, each specimen a marvel of beauty; of the lovely views of bay and coast when sunset and moonlight glorify them with meaning. It seemed to David that he never wished to leave the place; would never tire of haunting those magical staircases, each leading to a new wonder, a new beauty. But every day Godfrey declared must be their last. His tour of pilgrimage was sketched out, and though time was not limited, the fever of the *voyageur* was in his veins.

So at last they set off for St. Brieuc. David had but a hazy idea of routes or places. Godfrey's one thought was the churches and their history. It seemed to David they were as alike as their dedications; almost always it was "Our Lady." The Bretons were devotees of the Virgin for some reason. Notre Dame de bon Secours, Notre Dame de Grande Puissance, Notre Dame de Pardon, Notre Dame d'Esperance, and many another that he could not remember. For the Virgin did not interest him, save as an incident in a pre-arranged plan; a material vehicle for a material purpose. She had not seemed to influence her sacred Son, nor had He shown special devotion to her. Yet the Church had throned her as His equal, and worshipping thousands did her reverence and implored her intercession to do for them what her Son had proclaimed already done.

He was puzzled, too, by the discovery that the *mother* of the Virgin—Ste. Anne—had been proclaimed the patron saint of the Bretons; that she had a Pilgrimage and a Pardon day, and a special form of prayer appointed to be said in her name. Long before they settled down at St. Brieuc, as a resting-place, he had grown wearied of stories of saints, whose names were unknown to him and whose records were buried in past centuries of unreliable tradition. But all these things were of deepest interest to Godfrey St. Just; so by mutual consent they each went their own way, studied their own subjects, and discussed them in the long hot evenings when they strolled along by the port, or were rowed over the river, or sat idly in the park watching the sauntering crowds. It was at St. Brieuc that letters

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reached them. One for Godfrey; one for David. It was from Craddock.

David began to read the closely covered sheets with interest; Craddock's letters were always interesting, like himself. He put pen to paper for better purpose than to scribble platitudes. As David read, a hot flush rose to his temples. Godfrey glancing at his absorbed face noted it and wondered what news had so disturbed him. When the letter was finished the boy folded it thoughtfully, and looked at his friend.

"No bad news, I hope?" said Godfrey.

"No—oh, no——"

He hesitated, looking down once more at the neat, formal handwriting of his guardian.

"It is a strange letter," he continued. "But it's part of a—part of something that happened in London; something I hadn't expected to hear about again."

"No—escapades? I thought you were too much of a saint."

David flushed again. "It's something I hate to think of; I've tried to forget, to think it was only an idle fancy, born of idle hours, and all that sensuous, frivolous life of society; but *this*——"

Again he glanced at the disturbing epistle.

"'Give sorrow words,'" quoted Godfrey, with a faint smile. "Confession for confession, Saint David. I thought you were holding back something; you may safely trust my discretion."

IX

STILL David hesitated.

He had told no one of that episode; it seemed to him too disgraceful. A frenzied dream that he had resolutely put aside. But now Craddock had written of Lady Silchester's visit; the curiosity she had manifested about him. "Not content with bothering me," the letter went on, "she and her niece next turned their attention to your foster-mother. I have ascertained also that she, or Ruth Pascoe, gave your present address to these fine friends of yours. Possibly you will hear on what new lines their interest is to be conducted. I confess their curiosity annoyed me, and I let them see it."

David remembered Lady Silchester's persistent questions in London; her surprise at his own indifference as to his parentage, and the obstacles in the way of tracing it. But to follow it up in this manner seemed to imply more than ordinary curiosity. And Lady Pamela had come with her. Lady Pamela possessed his present address. What did it mean? Surely—surely she could not wish to renew the intimacy so abruptly terminated? To write—or pursue him?

"Well," said Godfrey suddenly, "have you weighed the pros. and cons. sufficiently, or am I not to be trusted?"

"Nonsense," exclaimed David. "You know I trust you; but this isn't altogether my secret. It concerns—"

"A woman, of course. A child could read you, David. I suppose you are frightened at the enormity of a crime existing only in your imagination. I don't believe it has gone farther. By the way——"

He considered a moment. "Wasn't there a little fisher girl, or something, who lived with an old preacher in your village?"

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sister. Then it seemed as if some deeper love sprang out of that early one—and I—I asked her to marry me.”

“You babe and suckling! What on earth were you thinking about? *You—marry.*”

“Why shouldn’t I; some day?”

“Well, I don’t know. Except that you seem such a young Puritan; and so absolutely indifferent to women.”

“I have not thought of them,” said David simply.

“At least—not until that time in London. I should like to ask your advice, Godfrey; but I’m so afraid you’ll laugh.”

“I promise to take you as seriously as you take yourself.”

Then in halting, hesitating phrases David related his experiences in London. He spoke of Lady Pamela’s apparent interest, her constant invitations; his almost daily visits; and then the scene in the boudoir: the shame and loathing he had felt for her and for himself. How it had been the turning point of his life; a revelation and a warning.

Godfrey listened with grave attention. He could read between the lines; he could see that the guileless young visionary had been a novel and exciting plaything for an unscrupulous worldling. Only she had shown her cards too soon; had frightened instead of alluring him. The question in his own mind was of a more disturbing nature than that in David’s. A “woman scorned” is a dangerous foe; very few take the experience kindly; it is at once too humiliating and too—unusual.

“In this letter,” went on David, “the Squire says that Lady Pamela and her aunt, Lady Silchester, have been down to Cornwall; have called on him; they procured my address from Ruth. What do you think it means?”

“That your fair friend intends to have another tussle with your scruples, I should say. The rôle of Joseph usually leads to complications. Tell me truly—were you never inclined to play traitor?”

David crimsoned. “I’m afraid I did begin to care. She was so lovely, and I had never met any one like her. But it never entered my head that she——”

“She would be the first offender? I expect you tried

CALVARY

her patience. I can quite imagine how blindly you would walk into such a trap. Still, I hope you really are out of it? Might I see just what Craddock says about that visit? Did you tell him anything, by the way——”

“Certainly not! I couldn’t speak of it to any one—then.”

He handed over the letter, and Godfrey read it carefully.

“It looks like a pursuit,” he said as he gave it back; “but we can easily cover up our tracks, if you wish. There’s no necessity to stay on here. We’ve got our letters; we can be off to-morrow, and not leave any address. That’s to say, if you really wish to avoid a *rencontre* with your Delilah?”

“Oh, I’m sure she’d never dream of coming to Brittany!” exclaimed David. “It would be so absolutely absurd.”

“Women do many absurd things when they’re in love,” said Godfrey.

“Oh, but Godfrey—a lady, well born, notable—think of it! She couldn’t hunt any man in such a fashion. It would look so—so disgraceful!”

“Disgraceful things are said and done every day and every hour in that world of hers. I know more of life than you do, David. I’ve seen and heard things that would make your hair stand on end; and at the root of the shame and the degradation there has been always and only that one excuse—a woman.”

“You mean French life—French women. I know there’s much to deplore in their morality, but in our country, Godfrey—in society, such as I met, surely a woman would draw the line at absolute immorality?”

“Did your Lady Pamela draw the line? Guarded as was your description of that scene in the boudoir, I can fill in the blanks you left. My dear David, women are women all the world over. The Devil’s playthings, our priests call them, and very fine toys they make; costly to purchase and worthless to keep! Here and there one may find a woman to respect, or to love; but they are rare; certainly not discoverable in the *fine fleur* of modern society. In any case they are best avoided.”

There was a long silence; then they rose and proceeded homewards. Suddenly Godfrey said: “Did you tell Ruth Pascoe of this little incident?”

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"Of course not," said David quickly. "She—she could not understand a woman of Lady Pamela's type."

"Don't be too sure," said Godfrey ironically. "You see they've met. Wait on results. Does Ruth write to you?"

"Yes. I am surprised there was no letter to-day. I gave her this address as you told me."

"Perhaps—to-morrow. That's to say, if we stay on."

"Why shouldn't we?" said David defiantly. "I'm sure you're wrong in your judgment. Lady Pamela might write, but nothing more."

"Oh, wise young Daniel!" mocked Godfrey. "You—who view life and the vileness of human nature from a standpoint of impractical purity! You—to calculate what a reckless feminine creature will do in the madness of passion! Wreck herself and her lover—and the whole world, too—if it stood between her and her heart's desire!"

"Ah, no—no!" cried David in deepening distress. "You talk of strange types and strange passions. Women like Cleopatra, or Catherine of Russia; and you forget—me," he added, flushing once more. "What on earth is there in me for any woman to care about so—so utterly?"

"Nothing, certainly, from our point of view," said Godfrey dryly; "but then, we're not women, God be thanked!"

"You seem to hate their very name?" said David.

"I do; I've good reason. I assure you that celibacy, however strict, will be no penance to me."

"But you're very young, Godfrey; only a year or two older than myself. Just suppose—some day later, you learnt that you had made a mistake; that you could not forgo a man's natural instincts; his right to love and be loved. The joys of home——"

"Avaunt, Sathanas!" said Godfrey, with a faint smile.

"Do you suppose I haven't reckoned with all that? Why, even the good Père François put them all before me; bade me go warily and count the cost. And now—you. I thought better of your Saintship."

"Ah, don't mock me!" cried the boy with sudden bitterness. "God knows I'm weak and erring and perplexed enough."

CALVARY

"Mock you, David! Nothing is farther from my thoughts. Possibly my own bitterness and disillusion make me seem hard; but I'm more than half-way on the road to priesthood, and then I shall make a holocaust of all this vileness and savagery that has been rampant long enough. Oh, if only we were of one mind on that point! If only you——"

David shook his head. "No—no, Godfrey! I am not in the least tempted. Abbeys and monasteries and shrines interest me, I confess, but I cannot find in them anything wiser, or holier—certainly nothing better—than my own Faith."

"You are recovering it?—Here?"

"Yes, thank God."

The next day they had planned to go to Paimpol, as Godfrey St. Just wished to visit a ruined abbey once founded by a Count of Breton for a company of Cistercian monks. It meant a twenty-six mile coach drive, and David, when he rose, felt disinclined for so long a journey only to see another of the countless abbeys that were always the same, and always tended to arouse a controversy on the uselessness of monastic life between himself and his friend. He therefore announced his intention of stopping at St. Quay, about half way, and suggested taking their small baggage to some quiet little hotel and waiting Godfrey's return. Portrieux and St. Quay had rather fascinated them both. In the intense heat of these summer days the sea made insistent appeal to David's passion, and St. Quay, being a very hotbed of ecclesiastics, tempted Godfrey to give in to the plan. Thus it happened that for the first time in their joint pilgrimage they separated, David leaving the coach at Portrieux as agreed. He was not sorry to have the best part of the day to himself; the endless discussions between right and wrong, Catholicism and Protestantism, had begun to weary his already wearied brain. In this land of endless superstitions he felt a natural reaction; a desire for the crudest and simplest faith rather than the more complex.

He had heard of legends and miracles by the score in every resting-place of coast or country; he had visited Celtic monuments and sacred stones; had seen *Pierres-*

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branlantes famous as his own Logan Stone, and again and again had he been reminded of the extraordinary likeness between the two countries.

The very monoliths and dolmens and cromlechs were but repetitions of those strange stones and rock altars and crosses which abounded all over Cornwall. It was natural to suppose that after the fifth century there had been a migration across the Channel; a commingling of nationalities. Perhaps that accounted for the similarity between the Cornishman and the Breton; a persistent industry and thrift; an easy contentment; a bigoted religiosity, tuned to different faiths, but also tainted with superstition. Cornwall had its saints and hermits; its pixies and evil spirits; its narrow, fixed creeds; its quaint phraseology—and so had Brittany.

Here, too, was the Breton fisherman toiling like his Cornish brother; the cider-makers; the virtuous, industrious matrons and maids who helped in the farm labour, and made the famous butter and cheese of the country, and reared poultry, and went to market even as their prototypes across the Channel.

"No doubt there's likeness, perhaps affinity; that accounts for my liking it so much," said David, as he threw himself down on the hard white sands.

It was late afternoon. A few children were playing near the sea, a few mothers and nurses seated around, chattering volubly and working at their endless knitting. Far off in the hazy distance the scattered islets lay like a linked chain. Here before him rolled the sea, placid, soothing, a mere murmur of lazy content. He half closed his eyes and tilted his straw hat to keep off the glare.

A dreamy peace stole over him; it was the lull of the opiate; the reaction after the turbulent warfare of thought. "Rest and pray," a voice seemed to whisper. "Is not the end always the same? A little joy, a little grief; dreams unrealized because unrealizable. Then the peace that no man comprehendeth; resignation to the inevitable."

"I wonder where I read that?" he thought. "But then I have read so much of late; too much. I'm brain sick, if there is such a sickness; and what's the good of it all?"

CALVARY

He half turned, resting his head on his arm, still keeping his eyes closed. The lulling peace of that drowsy noon-tide stole over his tired frame and aching brain. He fell asleep. A murmur of voices that seemed to be near and yet far and faint, stole in amidst confused waking senses, and David was suddenly conscious of fear.

Who was speaking? Surely there were not two voices with that charm of depth and softness, and swift, clear enunciation?

His whole body seemed one nerve of listening. He lay still as death.

They were speaking in French, these people, whoever they were:

"But yes, madame; this is the favourite *plage*. It is so tranquil, so sheltered, and one bathes in the sea of the mornings as you behold. Madame could not have found for herself a place more restful and more healthful for the nerves. And now, as I have shown madame where it finds itself, the *plage*, I will return to the convent. Madame is aware that one serves *le diner* at seven hours."

"Yes; thank you for showing me the way. You say there is no coach to St. Brieuc till to-morrow morning?"

"Madame has but just missed that of the afternoon; but she will find herself quite comfortable at the *Sacrés Cœurs*."

"I may only stay to-night—I can't say."

"It is as madame pleases. We have the families *en pension* all through the season; our rooms are always in request."

Then there was a murmur of adieu, and David's strained ears caught the faint rustle of a skirt coming closer to where he lay outstretched on the sands. He made no movement; surely she, whoever it was, would pass on, or was he still dreaming? All seemed still now; the speakers must have gone. Surely he might venture to rise.

He pushed back his hat and sat up abruptly; sat up and met the mocking glance of a woman's eyes. A woman not ten paces from where he lay. Lady Pamela Leaffe.

"Have you dropped from the clouds, my Saint David!" exclaimed the rich, thrilling voice he knew so well; "or what in the world brings you—*here*?"

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But he only sat dumbly gazing at her, asking himself if it were true, if it could be true, that on this lonely stretch of foreign sand he and his Lady of the Oratory were face to face again!

"How you stare? don't you know me? . . . or are you wondering why I am here? Well—I've come for change and rest; my health quite broke down and I'm staying in the sanctity of the convent yonder. Does that say enough?"

She leant forward, resting her chin on her hand, and looking at him with those strange golden eyes as she had been used to look in those other days he hated to remember.

"You seem to have lost your tongue as well as your senses," she went on. "Or perhaps it is joy that holds you speechless? The joy of the unexpected!"

Then he staggered to his feet and stood bareheaded in the glow of the sunset, the colour fading out of his face, a confusion of words hurrying to his tongue.

"It is—unexpected. You are the last person on earth I should have thought to see, Lady Pamela!"

"Am I? But why? Brittany is a famous health resort, and Portrieux and Saint Quay are well known. I have often thought of staying at the convent yonder when my sins have pressed home on my notice; but I have not done so before to-day. Is it not a charming coincidence that you should be here? I imagined you were in Cornwall."

David remembered that letter of Craddock's. She was lying to him. She had known perfectly well that he was not in Cornwall, but in Brittany; at St. Brieuc; for he had given that as an address for letters.

"I left Cornwall a month ago," he said. "I think you knew that."

"Why? Did you write to me?"

The eagerness of her voice startled him. Had she really expected he would write after—what had happened.

"No; I never wrote to you," he said brusquely.

Her hand dropped to her side. She rose slowly and languidly from the rough slab of rock on which she had been seated.

"Why not, David?" she said, and came nearer; so

CALVARY

near that the faint perfume of her hair floated to him as in those other mystic hours of mingled sanctity and sensuousness. He looked away from that seductive face to the blue sea, to the sunlit isles; his brain seemed all a whirl of confusion.

"Why not?" went on the insisting voice, nearer and sweeter now. He was such a tyro in the arts of *bonnes fortunes*; such an odd mingling of saintship and beautiful passionate youth that he appealed to this accomplished coquette as nothing had ever appealed. Besides, he had piqued her and neglected her. He knew enough of love to entangle himself with a common Cornish girl, and yet could be cold to *her*. The thought was an affront unparadonable.

"Why not?" he echoed stupidly; "because—oh, don't make me *say* it. You must know; once I forgot—you made me forget—that you were a married woman—that I was wronging your husband by such thoughts and desires as you encouraged. It was all shame, sin, horrible! When I began to think of it, away from you——"

"When you were with me—did you think it so wrong then, David?"

The hot colour surged to his temples. How could she jest about such things? Amidst all the tumult and confusion she had again aroused, he was conscious of a shame for her that she seemed incapable of feeling for herself; an antagonism that crept in between her unholy tempting and his unwilling recognition of it.

"Must we talk of what's past and done with?" he said. "Surely it is better not to revive such memories——"

"They are very dear little memories—to me," she said softly; "but if you wish to avoid them let us do so. Since chance has thrown us together once more——"

"Chance!" he said quietly. And their eyes met.

"Surely chance," she answered, her own eyes clear and innocent as a child's. "How could I have dreamt that you were making a pilgrimage here, or was it a Pardon? This is the land of Pardons. Suppose we journeyed to Ploemel together, David? Made a pilgrimage and a penance for our imaginary sin, as Henry the Second, of famous memory, did in days of old?"

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The mocking voice, the lovely face, how dangerous they were, and how familiar! Seeing that they brought back memory after memory, all fraught with fever and unrest; banished as evil.

He had thought to forget them and—her; put them away as things unclean; and here they were at his side—at his heart—knocking for admission; tempting with tenfold temptation. For had she not said she loved him, and prayed his love in return? How could she forget that scene? How bring herself to meet and talk to him as if it were of no importance? He had no power to judge a woman of her type; to fathom the mysteries of attraction and denial that had lent to her passion for him a limpet-like tenacity which astonished herself. She could not forget him; could not find any interest to equal that of his seduction. For *that* she felt she would brave all risks, even that of her husband's discovery.

She had not believed Reuben Leaffe's threats, and when an enforced journey to Russia left her free from his espionage she had at once determined to trace her young Saint's whereabouts. Week-ends were a glorious institution; one of them had gained her all the information she needed; another had brought her hot and sure on scent of her prey. Now he was once more at her mercy, and it would go hard with her if—this time—she could not break down those ascetic barriers of spirituality, and force from his lips the confession already betrayed by her own.

David could not emulate that jesting; his face never lost its gravity, nor his eyes their distress. He was a mere mouse for her feline claws, and she knew it. Fear and shame were with him, but not with her.

He recalled Godfrey's words of the previous night. How right they had proved! how much better he knew the world than David knew it! He had said that a woman who loved recognized nothing else but that love; would wreck herself, her honour, the whole world, if it were possible, if such things stood between her and her heart's desire.

It had seemed impossible to believe, and yet—here was proof of it.

That voice came to him again; softer, more persuasive.

CALVARY

"You are not the least glad to see me again, David. Ah—you don't know how I missed you. By the way—why did you run away so suddenly? Were you afraid?"

"Yes," he said brusquely. "Surely you know to what I was drifting. How could I help it? And it is unwise to see more of each other, as you suggest; I do not think it would be right. If you are here for your health, as you say, then I and Godfrey will leave—to-morrow. It is a pity I did not fall in with his plan of going to Paimpol; but this place looked so enchanting."

He glanced wistfully out towards the sea. She smiled.

"It is enchanting; you would be foolish to run away from it. And who is—Godfrey?"

"My friend, with whom I am travelling."

"And is he of your persuasion also?"

"He says he is going to be a monk."

"Good heavens!" She started, and then laughed.

"What an extraordinary idea! Are there English monks? I thought they were all abolished, or beheaded, or something. A monk and a saint! Truly I'm in good company. Where is this Godfrey?"

"He returns later to-night. He went by coach to see some abbey near Paimpol. You said you were staying at the Convent of the Sacrés Cœurs, did you not?"

"Yes; in the odour of sanctity. That ought to convince you how harmless I am. Ah, don't frown, David. Why are you such a saint? Do you never think of what you deny yourself? The pleasures and delights that might be yours for the asking?"

She was looking at him with half-closed languorous eyes whose confession he had read in the *Confession* of her London home. He felt his heart-beat quicken as he met that glance, but still he fought for honour.

"I don't think of such things except as dangers," he said. He half turned as if to leave, yet courtesy compelled he should wait on her movements.

"Walk with me to the convent," she said. "At least let us be friends for the short time I am here. Come and see me to-night, and bring Godfrey; I should like to make his acquaintance. Will you?"

"I expect he'll be too tired."

CALVARY

"You don't wish him to make my acquaintance, I can see."

For the first time David smiled. "Oh, yes; I should like him to know you," he said.

"Then bring him; we will stroll on the *plage* together. The days here are horribly hot, but the nights are divine. Promise to come."

"I cannot promise for Godfrey."

"Then for yourself? Why are you so afraid of me? I only want to be friends. It is really very unwholesome for you to live such a self-restrained life. Be young—for once—David; you may never get the chance again."

X

"YOU may never get the chance again."

The words echoed in David's heart; fired his blood as he recalled them, set to the provocation of glance and smile.

What would Godfrey think? What would he say? That he had been a true prophet and it remained for David to fulfil or disregard his predictions? Or would he counsel flight? It would be easy enough to leave; to go farther inland as they had already planned.

Yet how absurd it seemed to want to run away from this woman; what harm could she do? Then, the thought of her untruth flashed to his memory. That was horrible. She wanted him to believe that pure accident had brought her here; yet she must have come from St. Brieuc—come almost on their heels, as it were. His face grew hot at the thought of it; no man, however young, is quite proud of the fact of being pursued by a woman. If he loves her he has no mind to let her usurp *his* privilege; if he is indifferent, then such pursuit becomes an annoyance.

David had not one spark of the usual masculine vanity. He could not bring himself to believe that there was anything in him, or about him, to arouse such a passion as Lady Pamela had once insanely whispered. He had done his very best to put it aside into the limbo of unpleasant and forgotten things; and yet—here it was uncolling itself again. He was far too innocent to give it its proper name. He did not know that most social sins spring from false excitement; the desire for novelty; the spur of faded senses; a whim for a certain diversion that is dignified by the name of passion, but is even a more ignoble thing than lust. In the present instance there had been other elements than novelty; a smarting sense of mortification, of anger, of danger: veiled jests on the subject of her Saint Joseph from women of her set, who saw

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much and said more of any scandal among *their intimates*. To have it even whispered that her attractions could be denied was a blow too severe for Lady Pamela's vanity; and David's sudden flight had not been attributed to any virtuous repulse from herself. Stephen Ormistoun knew—that she felt sure; and Reuben, that dull, unconsidered background to her life, he had guessed the truth also. She had been at considerable pains to lull his suspicions, and she imagined she had succeeded. When he had been summoned to Russia she had entreated him to take her also, though in her secret mind she had determined that some convenient illness should intervene at the last moment to keep her in England. She assured herself quite confidently that Reuben had put aside that momentary jealousy; had forgotten his threats. In any case he was thousands of miles away, and not likely to hear of her week-end exploits. They were usually executed under the ægis of Lady Silchester's protection, but on the present occasion that lady had been left at a country house in Hampshire, while she steamed across the Channel and followed up the tracks of her young saint.

It was late when Godfrey returned; he was fatigued and hungry. David said nothing to him of his afternoon's adventure until he had dined and indulged in the luxury of a cigarette with his coffee.

The night was too glorious to remain indoors; it was Godfrey himself who suggested a stroll on the Grand Grève. Then David, in confused and hesitating words, broke the astounding news of Lady Pamela's arrival. He gave her own words, her plea of indisposition, and her strange freak of going to the convent instead of an hotel.

Godfrey listened in absolute silence to the recital. Then he laughed harshly.

"Poor Saint Anthony! Can one wonder he fled to a desert island! David, my friend, yours is what the old dramatists call a 'parlous case.' I won't be mean enough to follow up 'I told you so,' with natural conclusions as to what I told you; but I do think our fair friend is dangerous. Would it be possible for me to see her? I could judge better——"

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"She is most anxious to make your acquaintance," exclaimed David. "She asked me to bring you round after dinner."

"But are we admitted to the convent precincts? I know they receive lady guests, but I hardly fancy they include the male visitors of such guests."

"She gave the invitation," repeated David.

"What sort of opinion have you formed on the subject? Do you still believe that she is actuated by purely platonic emotions?"

"I don't know what to think; it seems—extraordinary. Of course, if I hadn't had that letter from Craddock I should have looked upon the meeting as accidental. She pretends it was. But knowing she had secured our address a week ago I could only conclude she had some other purpose in coming here."

"I can give a pretty good guess as to that. However, self-warned is self-armed. Let us beard the fair Delilah, and then formulate our own plans by what we can learn of hers."

But when a slim white-gowned figure met them half way to the convent, Godfrey St. Just acknowledged that there was indeed danger to be feared.

The smiling graceful insolence of this accomplished *cocodette* showed her as no amateur of her art. In no way did she betray herself or her real object; neither did she speak much to David. As he had said to Godfrey, but for Craddock's letter, it would have been impossible to believe her presence here anything but an accident of chance. She had wanted a perfectly quiet spot for a rest cure, and she had found one. That it happened to be on their route of travel was a coincidence charming enough to jest over; nothing more.

She talked to Godfrey St. Just as if his career and his asceticism were objects of her profound sympathy. She touched on David's mission services and the extraordinary sensation they had created, as if her interest in the young preacher was merely impersonal. So natural, so gracious, and so entertaining did she make herself that David felt half ashamed of his recent fears. Surely, surely that

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hateful episode was forgotten; it would never be repeated; he need not fear a renewal of temptation.

His silence and abstraction irritated Pamela; but she hid her feelings remarkably well; she could afford to wait now. No watchful eyes, no horrible household spies were about. She had not even brought her maid; but she had no idea that both David and his friend knew of her expedition to Cornwall and that she had secured news of his movements before pursuing him; neither had she reckoned on any safeguard of companionship such as that of Godfrey St. Just. That was the reason of her apparent interest in him, her attention, her seemingly ingenuous questionings.

She was conscious of an instant aversion for this grave, austere young priest, with his inscrutable eyes and his calm face and his chilling politeness. These were things she hated. Against them she could only measure the woman's weapons of seduction: of glance and smile and sigh, and subtle interest. But instinctively she felt that such weapons were powerless against Godfrey. He had gauged their worthlessness in her own field of combat, and he let her know it.

Also, he contrived to impress her with his fidelity to David. The bond of their friendship was no common bond; not only had it extended from College days onward, it was sanctified by a joint interest in the spiritual calling of each. Even if their ways divided, their hearts would remain unchanged. These things she had to gather from a conversation kept strictly impersonal as far as she was concerned. It was an affront to her importance as well as to her feminine charms; had she been able to read Godfrey St. Just's mind she would have learnt that, young as he was, he had taken her measure very accurately as that of a woman in whom an impure fancy had burnt like a consuming fire; fanned by impossibilities and denial until it was ready to overleap any barrier for gratification. The type was not uncommon. He had found it in the *salons* of the Parisian *mondaine* even as in the garish apartment of the brilliant and beautiful *déclassée*. If the English *mondaine* was outwardly colder than the Parisian sisterhood, yet, never-

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theless, had she her *liaisons*, her intrigues, her sensuous "affinities." One fair frail countess had made herself and her set so remarkable that a hint from Royalty had been given, and Court ceremonials knew her no more.

Godfrey studied Lady Pamela from a vantage point unknown, because unknowable to David. She interested him because she played her game so cleverly; because, had he *not* known otherwise, her interest in David seemed so spiritual and so sisterly that only a very evil mind could have seen anything wrong in it. But Godfrey's mind was quite evil enough to detect the wrong, to judge the real meaning of her present journey; and while he sympathized with tried nerves, and agreed as to the wonderful value of rest cures, he was making up his mind to take David away as soon as possible. The next day if he would go.

For fully an hour they had strolled along the *plage*, sometimes resting, but oftener moving, for all three were too perturbed to lose themselves in the lovely tranquillity of the scene.

At last Lady Pamela began to question of their plans. She seemed to take it for granted that their head-quarters were here, or at Portrieux, and suggested an expedition for the following day.

"I am sorry I didn't bring my motor," she said; "but it is rather a trouble. However, I will order a carriage from Portrieux, and we could lunch somewhere and drive home in the cool of the evening. I haven't looked up local show-places. I suppose you have; or is it only monasteries and Calvaries that have any attraction?"

"We were leaving to-morrow," said Godfrey, ignoring the latter part of her sentence.

"Oh, nonsense! You can't desert me just as I've arrived."

"I thought you had come only to rest, Lady Pamela? Sight-seeing is very fatiguing."

She bit her lip. How hatefully downright was this stern-faced young monk, whose panoply of virtue seemed a degree more defensive than even David's.

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"Oh, driving is not fatiguing," she returned lightly; "and this coast is so beautiful. It is a pity not to see as much of it as possible."

She stood and looked at them both, the clear starlight on her fair face and uncovered head; she had taken off her hat, as the evening was so warm.

They exchanged glances, each hoping the other would have excuse ready. She affected to take their silence as consent.

"Well, never mind the place; you can tell me to-morrow. Come over early and then we'll make our plans. Don't disappoint."

Then she went away, and into the convent, leaving the two friends in a perturbed state of mind as to what they should do.

"I thought you'd have said it was impossible!" exclaimed Godfrey.

"And I expected you to be definite; instead of which you only hinted at departure."

"Well," said Godfrey, "my habit is my protection. It would not be seemly to go about with lovely ladies in open carriages. You—must please yourself."

"Are you going to desert me?"

"Listen, David. Before we, of my faith, take vows, or make promises, we are tried by moral and physical temptations. Our tempers, our minds, our powers of self-denial are all put to severe tests; our very thoughts come under this ordeal. Some of us are cowardly and flee; some are over-confident and fall; some by prayer and fasting and scourging of the flesh escape. You are not training for such a severe order as mine, but you have to face your forty days' temptation even as our Lord did; even as every human soul at some time or another must face it. Perhaps *this* is your Wilderness; that woman yonder your tempter. The devil hides himself under many disguises, but his favourite one is that of the sex we call weak. We wrong it, David; it is the stronger in every sense save mere brute force. That being so, it needs courage to face. Have you courage? If not, let us leave here at once; at daybreak to-morrow if you wish; and leave my lady to draw her own conclusions."

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But David hesitated.

Common courtesy seemed to demand explanation, and explanation was more difficult than avoidance. Surely, one day—?

"I see you don't wish to go," said Godfrey abruptly. "Well, I can't make you; but if you stay here to-morrow and join in this expedition she is planning, you do so alone. I won't go with you."

"That's not quite fair," said David hotly. "You had it in your power to refuse; I left the decision with you; now you turn round and face me with two alternatives: I must be rude to Lady Pamela, or lose your companionship. And for why?"

"I should argue that out," said Godfrey dryly; "if you think it best to ignore what you told me happened in London, then do so; only don't expect me to stand by and watch your philandering. I would far rather leave you in the company of any *fille de joie* I have ever met, than with that whited sepulchre yonder!"

David crimsoned angrily. It seemed to him that Godfrey was arrogating the privileges of Father Confessor rather too soon. He had not scrupled to skim the cream of life himself, but, apparently, he had no mind that his friend should even look at it. He felt quite sure of himself; had he not escaped the snares of Delilah once already? Why should he fear them again? In any case he was prepared; and it always rested with the man.

Godfrey St. Just was speaking again.

"Forgive me, David; I've no right to preach to you, sinner that I am! only I've *been* through the mire and I know how it sticks. I don't want to stand by and see your white soul stained, if word or deed of mine can hold you back."

"I'm sure you mean well. But you see, Godfrey, you treat me as if I was still a schoolboy; as if I didn't know something of life by this time. Haven't I been in Paris too? and in London? Heard, read, seen, all that you suggest as dangerous? And such things have no attraction for me. I think I'm what Craddock calls fastidious; I should hate to think—afterwards. But why talk of such things! Don't you think I should look a bit of a fool to

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run away from here without explanation? You must remember she doesn't know we heard of her going to Trebarwick. Well, how can I tell her? Be a good fellow and stop just the one day more. What harm can come of it? We're out in the open air, not shut up in boudoirs now. And——"

"And a straw shows which way the wind blows, David. If that straw is your mind, and that wind a woman's desires, well, you must e'en face or fly it. Perhaps I have been treating you too much as a schoolboy—you look so absurdly young—if you're going to take your stand on manhood's prerogatives that alters the case."

"But you won't leave me here, as you said?"

"I most certainly shall leave you here. Any one could see I was *de trop*; I shall go on to Brest, and you can follow after you've finished meandering. I don't believe in mixing up facts and sentiments, and I've told you my opinion of that woman; she's dangerous, and she wants you. It's a bald, crude way to put it, but it's the truth. Messalina of old sought her lovers in the stables; her sister of to-day seeks them in the confessional, or the presbytery. I wish you knew what I know of Ritualistic priests and French abbés; but no matter. This is an interlude, a *mise en scène* set up on the stage of your limited experiences. See it out; play it out as you wish; only don't blame me for not warning you. I can read danger signals—unfortunately."

When David awoke next morning he found a note thrust under his door.

"Good-bye. I shall be at Brest, in three days' time. You can write or wire when you are free to join me.

"GODFREY."

XI

"FREE to join me."

As David read the words he felt a sudden thrill. *Free.* No one to order his goings and comings; the routine of the days. No one to say: "We must go here or there, see that or do this."

Perhaps Godfrey St. Just had been a little too fond of playing director and superior; a little too much inclined to treat David as some one very young and irrational; but for three days now he would be his own master; could come and go as he pleased.

He looked out on the dimpled sea, the bold outstanding rocks, the wide stretch of golden sands. Then he dressed himself hurriedly and went out for a swim. It was very early; no one was about; the quaint little machines were drawn up on the beach, but the visitors rarely troubled them till noon. He turned round the rocks of the Grève Noire, undressed, and plunged into the cool, shallow water. Far out he swam, rejoicing in the lovely coolness, the salt breath of the air; the wide, wide stretch of blue above, around, beneath. How glorious life was! The mere sense of powerful limbs, of command over an element of danger, held an exquisite sensation. He lay on his back and let the waves carry him where they would; then, growing tired of inaction, turned and swept with long, steady strokes towards a point he had set as landmark. At last he turned shorewards. As he rose on the long languid crest of the outgoing tide he saw a figure swimming in his direction. A touch of scarlet made a brilliant note against the blue water, and, half amused, David told himself they were bound to meet and pass before long.

A few more strokes would have brought him within recognizable distance of the swimmer, when suddenly a faint cry pealed out over the waters. "Help! . . ."

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It was a woman's voice. Then the figure disappeared. David struck swiftly out in the direction.

What was it? Cramp, exhaustion? He could not tell. The scarlet cap showed for one instant, then sank again. He redoubled his speed; he reached the spot, dived through clear depths, amongst predatory fish, seized the sinking form and bore it upwards.

Holding it with one arm he struck out for the shore, not pausing to look at the face. Like a dead weight the woman lay in his arm; breathless and confused he staggered along the length of the shallow water between them and the land; then laid her down on the warm sand, and saw it was Pamela Leaffe he had saved.

She lay stiff and motionless where he had placed her, apparently unconscious. They were some distance from the machines; he could see no one; he remembered how the Cornish fishermen revived, or assisted the drowning, and bent down to follow out their primitive methods. But, even as he touched the motionless figure it stirred; the eyes opened; a deep sigh burst from the parted lips. He threw himself on his knees and raised her head.

Thank God she was not drowned! Not even unconscious. For a few moments he rubbed her hands and moved the arms gently up and down to aid recovering breath. All the while he was murmuring frenzied words of joy, of wonder, of delight. He saw the colour steal back to the lovely face. He watched the panting breast draw in new breaths of life. Oh, how lovely she was, this creature of snow and fire, and pulsing passion! And they were so utterly alone. In all the world there seemed nothing but just themselves, with the heart of the throbbing earth beneath, and the blue of the tranquil heavens above.

Faintly she murmured his name. The white lids opened again and the glorious eyes looked back to his; her head was supported by his arm; the red cap had fallen and a mass of damp soft hair tumbled in confusion about her shoulders. As she spoke, as that sudden shiver ran through her, David became conscious of her attire, and his own. He coloured like a girl, and tried to withdraw his arm; but she put out her other hand and held him.

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"You saved my life . . . I owe it to you. . . . Oh, David!"

The faltering words stole sweet as music to his ears. How was he to read their falseness? Who was he, ignorant of woman's wiles and ways, to penetrate the skill and subtlety of her devices? It had been all a ruse, skilful, conceived and carried out on the spur of the moment. For Pamela was as accomplished a swimmer as a woman need be. To feign drowning and be rescued was a trick she had played at the Bath Club and other swimming competitions, but never so successfully as on this summer morning on the Breton coast.

Suddenly she sat up, in no way abashed at her costume. Were not foreign bathing establishments instituted for the exhibition of feminine nudity! She put up her hands to her head in a dazed, bewildered fashion. "What happened? Did I sink?"

"Yes," he said. "Quite suddenly. Was it cramp?"

"It must have been. It happened once before." She looked out to the shining waters and shivered convulsively.

"Oh, I remember; the sudden agony; sinking like a stone . . . and . . . Oh, David, if you had not been there?"

She rose slowly, stiffly, letting the long wet strands of hair envelop her. Then she looked at him again.

"My bathing wrap is over there," she said. "Will you bring it to me? And do run. You're shivering with cold."

He hastened to where the big voluminous bath cloak lay, where she had thrown it off before entering the water. The *batigneuse* in charge of the machines had seen nothing of the accident. He brought it quickly back and wrapped it round her.

"Now I'm all right again," she said. "Go and get into your clothes, and join me afterwards. I'll wait for you."

It was nearly half an hour before she rejoined him. She was dressed in a simple serge skirt and cambric blouse; her lovely hair was free and streaming to her knees, a tawny cloak shot through with threads of living gold.

David was calmer now; a little abashed, but infinitely more human than she had ever found him.

For herself, her mood was of the most harmless simplicity, just touched by fervour of gratitude. She walked to and

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from the sands in the warm sunlight. No vestige of the society coquette, the woman of the boudoir about her; only a little tremulous tenderness in her smile, or in her eyes as she spoke to or looked at her young preserver.

No wonder the boy was disarmed. No wonder he believed that *this* was the real Pamela; that the other, the first known, was but the artificial product of her surroundings. That it was dead, forgotten; harmless ever to rise again or touch him with its sorcery.

She read him like a book. It was all what she had hoped for, yet hardly dared to expect.

She soon learnt that Godfrey St. Just had departed; that David was alone. Her heart gave a sudden quick throb. Alone—here with her; amidst these enchanting solitudes of sky and sea. Truly, "*Tout vient à point à qui sait attendre.*"

David awoke one morning with a start. Three days had passed since Godfrey had left. How had they gone? Each held memories dangerous and beguiling; every string of imagination, of spirituality, of young and fervid ambition had been delicately sounded by skilful fingers. Promises had been many.

"Only come back to London, David; only let me help you. The world shall hear of you; your influence will be increased a thousandfold. Enter the Church by the regular door and you may attain its highest honours. And I—how proud I should be; proud as Héloïse of Abelard."

Honeyed poison all; breathed by lips well schooled in arts of seduction. He could not but remember his success in London; the crowded church, the attentive faces, the incessant invitations and notices of that brilliant month. And this might all be his again. This and more if only—

Ah—that *only*. How had the tempter once worded it—"if only thou wilt fall down and worship me."

He woke as from an evil dream. Perilous days had passed and left their records. He must brace himself for resistance; he must prove to Godfrey that he was stronger than he had believed.

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He must leave here ; he had awakened with that determination in his mind.

He crossed his room and looked out from the open window over the quiet sea ; a grey haze covered it ; inky clouds lay piled above the distant coast-line. The air was very hot and very oppressive.

"I must go," he repeated, and began to wander aimlessly about the room, putting his things together.

The previous night he had received a letter from Ruth ; rather a sad little letter penned in the disturbance of troubled thoughts, with the uneasy memory of that lovely lady's visit. She spoke of it very briefly, but David could see it had puzzled her. Now he knew only too well why it had been made ; for what purpose Lady Silchester had been carried into Cornwall ; for what purpose that address in Brittany obtained. Often of late had Lady Pamela spoken about the mystery of his birth ; alluded to herality, to instincts surer than mere accident. Her purpose had been to make him look upon his Cornish friends as commonplace ; to place his indebtedness to them on a basis of gratitude rather than of kinship.

Then she had whispered softly of his power even over worldly souls such as her own. They had discussed Christian faith and doctrines with the passion of Abelard and Héloïse. In a country sacred to their memory it was not unnatural that that tragic history should be introduced.

With all the seductive tenderness of which she was capable, Pamela had whispered how he reminded her of the ill-fated monk of Le Pallet : he whose teaching and fame had once drawn all France to his feet ; he who for love's sake had sacrificed his splendid hopes, and died in obscurity. That story of romantic passion lost nothing in the telling, and none could have appealed more to the mingled spirituality and idealism of David's nature. It seemed to him that he was facing the same ordeal. On one side the glory of Christ's service ; on the other—this fatal fascination drawing him into the snares of sensual temptation.

But now he had resolved to put that temptation aside.

There was no longer any discourtesy in departure ; all along he had spoken of it as bound to happen within this

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glorified with. Yet on the previous night they had parted with the usual hope of meeting to-day.

As he thought of it, looking out on the dull green waters, he was keenly conscious of the mingled irritation and desire this woman always produced. To know her was to remember her, even if the remembrance tended to fear, or dislike, or that strange sting of longing and of shame which she managed to implant.

"But I will go; I will only see her to say good-bye. I can catch the coach, and then train direct to Brest. I'll send a wire to Godfrey from Portrieux. This—can't go on."

Yet he sighed as he put his few possessions together, and looked round the little room that had known so many hopes and fears and self-communings. He knew that a breath of folly, a whisper of danger had crept into those communings many a time; he had risen from them ashamed and self-condemned and yet believing he should conquer in the end. Sophistry was no longer unknown; and sophistry had spelt for him every reason of detention save the real reason. "I can leave when I wish—any day, any hour," he had told himself. And now this was the fourth day—and he had not left.

A brooding haze still hung over sky and sea. He came back from his swim tired and unrefreshed. Since that eventful morning Pamela had not bathed so early. There was no need.

He took his coffee and rolls, and then went down to the *plage*. There was still plenty of time before the coach started, and it would be impolite to evade farewells.

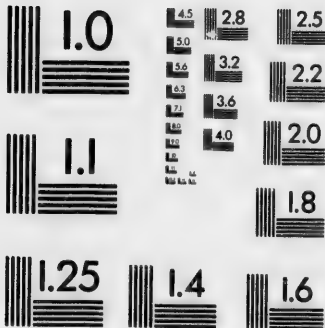
In a few moments they had met; she was on her way to the bathing-place, and greeted him as usual. But the hint of disturbance in his face and voice was not lost on her.

"Going—to-day?" she echoed as he murmured excuses for not accompanying her. "But so am I; I've ordered a carriage after *déjeuner*. That stuffy coach is impossible. Why not come with me, David? We've not been to Bréhat yet. Let us drive to Paimpol and take the ferry boat across. Think how cool and delicious it must be; that island dropped into the sea as it were. You've said it reminded you of Cornwall!"



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CALVARY

"So it does; but I must not delay, if I'm to catch Godfrey at Brest. He would have been there yesterday."

"You can see Godfrey any time; but we'll never again have the chance of going to this island together. Don't say no to it, David."

She smiled up at him; that dangerous languid smile. It broke down all excuses; after all, a few hours more or less, what difference could they make? And it was their last day together; their very last.

"I must return to England to-morrow," she went on. "This has been rather a long week-end; but it's done me a lot of good."

So he yielded—as she had known he would. One day more of idle hours, of drifting a little nearer to a danger he had scorned. Could any harm come of it?

Very warily Pamela played her part now. The prey was so nearly captured, the trap so nearly closed. She had secured his promise before she entered her *cabinet de bain*, and she bade him return and bring his travelling bag and breakfast with her. Blindly he obeyed. He was in the half-obsessed, half-dreamy condition of the drug-taker; and truly Pamela Leaffe was as dangerous as any drug; many before himself had confessed to that.

But she was very wary still—in this instance. It would never do to scare him again as on that occasion in her boudoir. It almost surprised herself that her fancy had outlived that rebuff. What was there in this boy to so attract and enchain her vagrant senses? Was it his physical beauty, or his daring innocence, or that consciousness that if he fell at her tempting, she would be the first who had ever succeeded as his temptress?

They lunched at the "Continental," and late in the afternoon were rowed over to Bréhat.

It was a large island amongst a cluster of islands; lonely and desolate enough in time of storm, or when the tourist season was over. The *bourg*, or village, contained two inns; bathing, fishing, shrimping constituted the only amusements. Pamela insisted on visiting the little chapel, which stood on a rocky eminence, only reached by a long rough flight of steps cut into the rock.

It was an ordinary simple place, with nothing note-

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worthy save the usual altar and the usual signs of Mariolatry; but from the height on which it stood the view was beautiful. Below stretched the little pier and on either side lay the fields of grain and vegetables that formed the industry of the island. A lighthouse stood on the opposite point to the chapel; and all around stretched the wide sea, and the rocky islets, and the lovely curves of the coast from the Sept Isles to Chaussey.

All the day had threatened storm, and the stifling heat was extraordinarily oppressive; even on these heights neither breeze nor coolness met them. Something of the languor of the air seemed to oppress David—a curious uneasiness and disturbance.

"There is a storm coming on," he said. "I know the signs."

She drew a little nearer. "Oh, not thunder, I hope; it terrifies me."

"Does it?" he said. Involuntarily his thoughts reverted to that last thunder storm he had witnessed; that night when the Wanderer had departed, vanished, as it were, into the gloom and turmoil of the night, with never a farewell or promise of another meeting.

Pamela watched him. Where were his thoughts? Not with her, she felt certain.

For a few moments neither spoke.

The sky grew darker above. The sea took on a new tint, unlike its glorious blue of summer days. Sea birds screamed and hovered over the shoal of scattered rocks. The note of the waves grew sullen and threatening.

"We had better go down to the inn," said David.

But before they reached it the rain had commenced; a torrid drenching shower, that left Pamela wet to the skin. She had no protection save her silk sunshade, and her flimsy muslin bodice was soon soaked. She made light of the trouble. Only when they reached the inn she begged for a fire to dry her blouse and her hair.

They were the only occupants of the little sitting-room. The proprietor of the inn, who talked a barbarous Breton dialect, took them for husband and wife, and suggested their remaining the night.

The storm was coming up strong and fierce. The boat

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would never be able to get back. All the excuses of policy and cunning were ready on her lips, as she bustled about, watching the sturdy servant girl light the stove, and assuring her visitors that they should have a dinner of the very best and an *appartement* of all comfort if they would trust to her hospitality. David did not comprehend half of what she said, but Pamela caught at the suggestion. Yes, they would stay. Why not?

She had planned some accident of detention, and brought over her dressing-bag. Fate was playing into her hands for once. While her blouse and skirt were drying she threw on a thin silk *peignoir*, in colour a pale rose. She unloosed her hair to dry it in as matter-of-fact a manner as if the garrulous landlady's suppositions were correct.

"She takes us for brother and sister," she said to David, who was watching the progress of the storm. "What a charming adventure, is it not?"

He turned from the window. She was kneeling now before the open door of the big quaint stove. How lovely she looked, the loose waves of hair falling around her, the grace and suppleness of her figure outlined by the thin transparent folds of her wrapper.

Without, all was dark and chill. The wind was rising, the rain dashed in sleetv sheets against the window, but within there was the warmth and comfort of this quaint room and that charming figure kneeling by the stove.

Brother and sister? Truly she was making no stranger of him. How sweet and fair and young she looked, drying her hair, and looking up at him through its glorious veil; no hint of that hot and cruel caprice at work within her heart, bidding her rejoice and be glad, for surely her hour of triumph was nigh.

He came and stood beside her.

"What lovely hair you have! I remember thinking so that morning when——"

"When you saved my life, David," she said softly. "Ah, I can never forget it. And yet, who knows, it might have been better had you left me to drown. At least it would have saved me much unhappiness."

"Why should you be unhappy?" he asked. "You have so much to be grateful for; wealth, honour, beauty, friends——"

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She shook her head. "Such things don't fill a woman's heart, David. Mine was cold and empty enough until——"

She paused meaningly.

He did not ask for explanation. He was conscious of disturbance, pain, unrest.

Suddenly she rose from her knees. "Why, my dear boy, you've never changed your wet coat! For goodness sake take it off and dry it here. You'll catch your death of cold!"

She began to assist him. How pleasant it was to feel that caressing touch, to be swept with a tress of that shower of hair. Yet a sense of shame abashed him as the coat and waistcoat were removed, and hung before the fire on the back of a chair. There was something dangerous in this familiarity, this association of commonplace incidents. Yet she seemed to think nothing of it.

Her half-bare arms gleamed white against the ruddy glow of the fire. Her face was flushed; her eyes, brilliant as topazes, watched him as the eyes of a forest beast might watch its runaway prey. That strange look disturbed him. But the whole atmosphere breathed disturbance.

She was an adept in scenic effects, believing love to be as much of the senses as the heart. But here she had nothing to aid her save the affectation of homeliness and simplicity. She could only pretend to be perfectly at home, perfectly natural, as if indeed they were the brother and sister she had declared they were taken for.

The storm grew fiercer as the evening advanced. The sea was a turmoil of dashing waves. The wind howled around the little island as if threatening it with destruction. The sky was black and starless. But here, in this little humble room, all looked homely and peaceful. Dinner was served to them, simple, but well cooked, and for once Pamela broke down David's resolution, and forced him to take wine. It would prevent chill, she said; and if he did not take it, she would not. So he drank it, not with any sense of liking or appreciation, but just because he was hypnotized by this accomplished sorceress as surely as were any of Circe's lovers by their enchantress.

He had no idea of the time, nor had he asked whether she would remain at the inn for the night. He had some vague thoughts of taking the ferry boat to the mainland

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when the storm should be over. But there seemed no need for haste. The dreamy intimate hours glided on. She was so gentle, so gracious, so subdued; that shadow of parting touching all she said and did; the subtleties of "do you remember?" an ever-recurring regret of these four days together.

The old Breton woman waited on them, lit the lamp, left candles; then she went away saying something which David did not understand, or Pamela think it necessary to translate.

Again he went over to the window and opened it. The wild rain blew in and lashed his cheek. All was dark and stormy in the outer world, and yet he felt suddenly that the dangers of the sea and the storm were less terrible than this conflict of soul and sense; this horrible dread of weakening power; of something drawing him slowly, surely, steadily to a worse thing than death.

She bided her time patiently. They were early folk at this primitive little hostel. Soon they would all have retired. She had told the woman they would remain the night, and her bedroom opened from this sitting-room. David had seen her pass in and out. She had rearranged her hair before the glass, but had not changed the rose-silk wrapper. She knew how becoming and suggestive such graceful *negligée* was to her. As David struggled to reclose the window, she swiftly extinguished the lamp. He imagined the draught had done it, and groped his way back to the table.

Then he felt a light touch on his arm. The subtle perfume of her hair, her laces, herself, crept over the dividing space. His heart beat violently. Vaguely he was conscious that some hour of fate had come.

"David"—it was the faintest whisper. He could not see the quivering lips, the covetous, burning eyes. "David," went on the seductive voice, "the fates are against us. Here we must stay, storm-bound, till morning. Tell me, are you sorry?"

He strove for words, but none came. He was only conscious of the warmth and loveliness so close; within his arms; heart to heart, lips crushed to lips; of a joy that was agony, an agony that was joy.

Very little they said. What need?

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XII

A LITTLE fishing village crouched the outer fringes of the Breton coast. The sea surrounded it on either side. The land ran into the great rocks that stood up to defend it. Houses were mere fisher huts, some made of old disused boats, and some mere sheds for storing nets and tackle. The trade of the place was that dangerous and toilful one of the fisher. The people were all poor, hard-working toilers of the sea; holding their lives in their hands, and daily compassed by death and privation.

For miles on either side stretched the great cliffs, jagged, rough, worn into strange shapes, indomitable as the courage of the race they defended; worn into a vast network of caves, for ever haunted by the shrill screams of tempest-tossed birds. A wild place; a place out of the beaten track of humanity: a place of toil and storm and awful loneliness.

Far up the heights stood a rude stone group, carved by unknown hands. A Calvary like so many Breton Calvaries, yet unlike them in that the figure possessed a more gracious dignity, and the face a charm as of pardoning peace.

Set there above the thunder of the sea, it looked out on the ocean and the land, as if defying their destructive force. The people around regarded it with superstitious reverence. Far out at sea they could see that great stone cross and that piteous figure, guardian of their village, their homes, themselves. Strange tales were told of that figure. It was said to have magical powers, to have restored the sick to health, to have answered the prayers of sorrowing penitents.

Of late a new story had crowned it with new honour. At daybreak one summer morning, the old curé of the chapel had been coming homewards after a night spent at

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the bedside of a dying man. As he came near the Calvary he saw a figure lying prone at the foot of the cross; the figure of a young man. The arms were thrown out as if embracing the cold stone. The face was hidden from sight. The warm sun-rays played on the uncovered head and the gold of its roughened curls.

Astonished at the sight, the old priest bent over the figure and spoke. There was no answer. He tried to lift the head, and then saw that the youth was unconscious. Gently he turned the body round and tried to restore sense and feeling. After long moments the eyes opened.

Bewildered, they gazed at the kindly face; the blank, unseeing stare of madness and delirium. Speech was incoherent, almost unintelligible. The stranger was as one labouring under some shock or grief that had upset all normal faculties. The kindly curé did what he could—bathed the pale face, poured a few drops of the cognac in his flask between the set teeth, then assisted him to rise, and led him to his own little cottage, almost as poor and ill-furnished as those of the fisher folk. He saw that the youth was in the last stages of exhaustion. He gave him his own wooden bed, and made his old Breton servant prepare him some soup. All that day the stranger lay in a speechless stupor. Towards night he grew feverish and talked wildly—sometimes in English, sometimes in French. Père Jorande, though a native of Brittany and used to talking the patois of the country, had received a good education and knew the French of Normandy and the cities. This young man talked as a foreigner talks. He imagined he must be English. But what could have brought him to this out-of-the-world spot? Over miles of plains and rough, wild country, to where that Calvary stood.

He was the kindest and most charitable of human beings, and he gave up his bed and his time and his care to this stranger without counting the cost. He was rewarded on the third day by seeing some recovered light steal back to the dazed eyes; the restless voice ceased its incoherent babbling. Faint and weak as a child, the stranger lifted his head and looked around, muttered brokenly of some place, some name too barbarous for Breton compre-

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hension. The curé answered in his best French; told of where and how he had found him, asked gently of his name, his purpose in coming to such a place. But there he was baffled. He could learn nothing. The boy only repeated wearily: "I am no one. I came from the sea. Let me go back to it."

When strength and health returned he wandered down to the fishermen's huts, and watched them mend their nets and prepare their boats. They regarded him with superstitious reverence; this white-faced youth with the golden hair who had been found at their wonderful Calvary. When they discovered he, too, could row and sail a boat and ply a net their wonder increased. They were short of hands just then and glad enough of assistance. But they could learn nothing of his history. Memory was a blank to him. In vain the old curé plied him with gentle questions, tried to lead his thoughts back to that strange pilgrimage. Always that shake of the head, that look of pained bewilderment; nothing more. One thing alone they remarked. Every day of his life at morn and evening he sought that Calvary, knelt before that pitying figure. Yet he was not a Catholic, neither did he ever enter the little chapel for any service.

Weeks drifted into months. The fierce storms of autumn swept over the sea. The wild goats fled to the crags and shelter of the cliffs, and the wind was a thing of terror. The boats were all drawn into shelter now, and the stranger had no longer any occupation. They wondered why he remained. Even Père Jorande wondered, and asked him one day of his own land. They were standing together on a plateau of the cliffs; high above great boulders that sheltered the wild birds whirling and screaming around. Farther inland from where they stood were scattered *menhirs*; gigantic monsters of stone older than any known history could date, things of legendary time when the sea had been a pathless forest, reaching far away into the rocky arms of Cornwall. Père Jorande spoke of these legends. As he mentioned that English coast a strange, uneasy look came into his companion's eyes.

"Where did you say?" he asked suddenly.

"To the Cornish coast. It is not so far as it seems. We

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have much in common, specially these Druidic monuments, these ancient altars of sacrifice. Countless ages have come and gone. Mountains have lapsed into the sea. Forests have fallen and rotted into nothingness. The devastating waters have crept on and on, untiring and destructive. But these great monuments have outlived all else. The *menhirs*, the *cromlechs*, the *Galgals*. Wind, rain, storm, and tempest have not prevailed against them. Wise men of to-day read strange meanings into these stone monsters. They may be right. Who can say?"

He talked on, but the strange youth seemed inattentive. His great sad eyes were fixed upon that rocky ridge stretching shark-like through the width of waters—a pathway of far-off centuries to another land, another coast, strangely like this one on which he stood.

Where was it? How did it recall some hazy dream, something ages back in memory, and yet—that might at any moment return, and be near—quite near?

It was torture to try and recall that memory. It made his brain reel. The burden of events, of some crushing horror, was too much for his mind to carry. His senses were overshadowed with darkness. Far back in that darkness crouched fear; the fear of some tragedy, some sin, some awful thing waiting to spring and crush out his very life. Yet life was all dim, all a dream; only shadows filled it. The voice of the sea alone came to him as the voice of a friend, something dear and remembered in far back days.

Père Jorande took hope at that first sign of interest. The name of Cornwall was the first name that had seemed to touch a chord of memory. The good curé tried another such legend, that of the fair and lovely city engulfed by the waves, lying far below those storm-tossed waters—the city of which chance glimpses have been vouchsafed; whose church bells ring in the ears of the faithful on the eve of Noël, the Lyonesse of the Scilly Isles, the Broceliande of Brittany. But that faint spark of interest died out into the old perplexity. Only two subjects seemed to fill this dazed brain; the sea and the Calvary above it. On the one he toiled, at the other he prayed.

The solitude and loneliness of the dying year wrapped all the village of Plourn'ach. Food was scarce, as always,

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and in the closing days the place was desolate as death. The slate-coloured sea was but a cataract of boiling rage, for ever breaking, seething, roaring at the base of the giant crags. It had little beauty, only a terrible power and a terrible warning. Yet never a day passed that the curé's strange guest did not brave its fury, and climb those heights to where the stone Christ stood.

For long, long moments he would stand and gaze at the carved face, drooping so wearily, as if the weight of the world's sins were more than it could bear. Then he would fall on his knees and try to weave his tangled thoughts into prayer. But though his lips moved, his soul seemed empty.

"Oh, Christ, help me! Help me, O Christ!"

Over and over again that was all he found to say. What sort of help he needed never entered into the petition. Empty, broken, spent as sea-drift tossed up by the sea, so he saw himself, and saw his life. Of any friend, of any hope, of any love he was absolutely unconscious. Only that sacred Figure had come to him out of the storm and the night. That Face had bent over him in his misery. Crushed and broken he had cast himself down, hearing amidst storm and stress nothing but its pitying entreaty: "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest."

But he wanted something more than rest. What was it? Pardon. Pardon for what?

Something unrecallable, something drowned in a great gulf of blackness; something—that hidden foe crouching in the background, ready to spring out on him in some unsuspected moment; haunting the scarred and storm-rent crannies of these Breton crags, sounding in the wail of the wind, the note of the storm.

The curé offered him books from his scanty library; talked of the consolations of religion; told him legends of saints and sanctuaries scattered abroad over this legend-haunted land. Sometimes he listened with interest; but oftener he sat gazing into vacancy; those strained, unyouthful eyes asking ever that one question to which no answer came.

Sunset was fading from out the ocean. A pool of blood lay centred by its rays. Then the brilliance faded to

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duller hues. Green and grey the sullen waves swept inwards. The sea fowl fluttered into their nests among the cliffs.

Afar—rising and falling on the heavy swell—a little vessel showed itself from time to time. It rolled as if water-logged. No hand seemed to guide it. The sail alone was spread to the gusty wind that sometimes filled it, sometimes left it idly flapping to the mast.

It came nearer to those shark-like rocks.

A solitary figure standing by the signal Calvary saw it. He watched it with growing wonder. If it pursued that course it would be on the rocks in a few moments; caught by the sharp teeth of that outrunning reef whose dangers all mariners and fishermen knew well. The daylight was fading. Darkness followed swiftly on sunset these early winter days. Who could be in that vessel steering with such reckless hands?

He left the heights, and ran rapidly down the cliff to where the village lay cradled in a gap, caught back, as it were, from the shelterless wall of rock with their crown of *menhirs* and *dolmens* far above.

A few fisher folk were gazing out at the doomed vessel. It seemed an ordinary fishing lugger. Yet who on all that coast was so ignorant of landmarks as to steer for Plour-na'ch with the wind to leeward? It must strike that reef. There was no help for it. "Why," they told one another, "one would imagine the steersman was doing it for a purpose. Surely he could see the danger before his eyes."

The wind rose as the sun set. The waves grew momentarily higher and fiercer. The usual motion and murmur of air and sea increased to the sullen threats they knew so well, and had such cause to fear. Then a voice rose entreatingly: "Give me a boat. Let me go. There is some one on board. I can see him!"

The rough men around looked at the speaker. He—that stripling, to talk of braving the waves in hopes of rescue! Again he implored and besought. But they shook their heads. They had ropes at hand, if the craft were near enough for rescue. But a boat—that was another matter.

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Then the voice of the old curé made itself heard. "The boy is right. Look—if you keep to the left there, the force of the sea is broken. It might be possible to save a life, or lives. It is our duty. Come, I will help you myself."

So—unwillingly, yet swiftly, as custom had taught—they dragged a boat from out its shelter, tossed in a coil of rope, and let the boy spring into it. Before another hand was at his service he had sent it flying, touching spray and foam as lightly as a bird. Often had they admired his prowess and his speed; but now they stood and gazed as if a miracle had been performed; crossing themselves and asking Heaven to protect that daring youth, for surely it was into the very jaws of death that he was adventuring.

"A lantern—quick!" commanded Père Jorande, and willing feet and hands flew to obey the order. A few moments and its rays of light flashed out over the darkness. But the sudden descent of night baffled sight and distance. They could only see the long white line of foam marking where that ridge of danger lay.

Other lanterns were brought, other lights flashed; but for long nothing was seen or heard. Then from the turmoil of wind and waves a cry arose.

Was it for help? None could say.

They held ropes ready to throw into that boiling sea when the moment arrived. But in their hearts they told themselves that such a moment never would arrive. The rash youth had gone out to meet death as certainly as those he wished to save.

Then again—the cry; nearer now. They flashed the lights in one broad stream, and saw the boat coming towards them, lifted high on the crest of the waves, sinking down into the deep trough of dividing waters. Figures were in it, straining at the oars, pulling with strong, brave strokes such as only the trained seaman knows.

Was it possible? A miracle it must be—nothing else.

Then a huge wave showed itself, following up behind like a devouring monster eager for its prey. A shudder

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ran through the watching group. The boat could never escape *that*. It would be overwhelmed, swamped.

But it was not overwhelmed.

Light as a cork it rose, was steadied for one breathless instant, then dashed up the strand amidst spray and foam, was seized by willing hands, grounded safely on the beach, while the sullen waters drew back as if despoiled of rights. A tall figure leaped lightly to the strand. But the other, that of the rescuer, stumbled feebly forward, half-dead with exhaustion. The light played on his white face, his nerveless arms, the mingled terror and question of his wide frightened eyes; for memory was struggling with bodily weakness; memory and fear, and yet some newborn hope.

Then a voice reached him, trumpet clear amidst the strife of wind and waves. "*David*," it said; and then more softly—" *David!* "

The boy started as if a pistol shot had struck him. Then, hands outstretched, he staggered forward, and fell face downwards at the feet of the man he had rescued.

The group of fishermen stared and muttered, and crossed themselves again. What new mysteries were happening in their midst?

The old curé alone heard the words that the stranger spoke as he lifted the prostrate figure, gazed down at the deathlike face: "*Greater love hath no man than this—that a man should give his life for his friend.*"

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XIII

THE sullen rains and stormy winds of late autumn beat against the windows of Trebarwick; drenched and lashed the summer glories of the garden; made the coast all murk and tumult, and plaint of the desolate sea.

Shut close within his sheltered walls, the Squire took little heed of it all. Day followed day, and found him a little wearier, a little weaker; less inclined for exercise or disturbance, more profoundly interested in that new study he had taken up: the examination of the Vedantine literature for the purpose of translation into English.

The enormous difficulty attending such study, and the greater difficulty of procuring requisite authorities, were at once a spur and an impediment to his labours.

The language presented no obstacle, for he had learnt it in his wanderings in the East; also he had secured a helper in the shape of an Oriental professor, who had agreed to stay with him for a few months, much to the disgust of the establishment at the Hall, to whom a black man was only a "nigger," and to whom the potentates of the East represented nothing but a race who wore jewels in their noses and their ears, and worshipped idols, and rode on elephants.

"O East is East, and West is West,
And never the twain shall meet,"

is more true of racial peculiarities than most sayings are. The habits of the Orient and the Occident are as far divided as the poles, and equally incapable of any touch of unity. Two they have ever been, and two they are, and two they will be till such a thing as Race has ceased to exist.

Friendly and enlightened as Dharma Lal was, he never tried to conceal a certain contempt for Western barbarities, as he called them. Crude methods of living:

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greed for food ; unhealthy craving for alcohol in any form. Then the ugly and uncomfortable clothes ; the unabashed women, with their unveiled faces and half nude forms showing themselves in public assemblies and places of amusement. These, to the mind of the stern Eastern tyrant, seemed things incomprehensible and reprehensible. He had held a professorship at King's College and spoke English fluently. Craddock had met him in London and engaged him at a salary double that he was earning, to assist him in his new hobby.

The study engrossed him to the exclusion of all other matters. All day, and far into the night, he and Dharma Lal talked, read, translated ; but the work progressed very slowly. He saw it as a thing of years, excluding human interests more jealously than any previous experience, and yet enfolding such interests so closely that exclusion meant a future union. For a thousand years were but as a moment in the limitless field of esoteric knowledge, even as they had been in the history of human development.

Craddock knew that the Western mind is a thing of bigoted prejudices, slow acceptance. His scheme was to save false starts by submitting a living storehouse of knowledge to those who chose to seek for supplies. He merely desired to show the way ; each student could pursue it for himself. The New Theology was but the oldest of all religions ; founded on the most ancient of religious records : the Vedanta philosophy.

In the East were the first temples. In the East wise men had meditated on the problems of existence ten thousand years before the Written Word gave them place. From the East came the conception of God (Brahma) as sole existence ; the doctrine of immortality of the Soul ; that undying flame never extinguished, coming forth from the one Life, returning to it again.

Then, lowering conceptions to meet human needs, a simpler doctrine had been given forth, teaching of the Creator as a personality ; something to be feared and appeased and worshipped ; a Being of dread and wrath, for ever wreaking vengeance on the weak and foolish objects of his own creation. Symbolism sank to idolatry.

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One God became a Trinity of Gods; and even a Trinity soon ceased to be enough. And yet, if the East worshipped a million or a hundred million gods, how many gods and creeds had not the West amassed as necessary to salvation!

Craddock looked up from the lines before him. Near the fire sat the dark, turbaned figure of his teacher; he was not writing or reading; he was enjoying long lazy whiffs of fragrant Turkish tobacco.

Craddock watched him for a moment; then he said: "Do you really mean what you have written here? That India is the *only land* where the great truths that underlie the earliest philosophies are still known and preserved?"

"If I have written it, it is true," was the sententious reply.

"And that all creatures must return whence they came? The True to the Truth. Yet they know not they came thence, nor return hence?"

"It is so written in the *Samaveda*. We may not know we have come back from the True, but——"

"Stay," interposed Craddock quickly, "why do you say come *back*? Is it a non-ending return; a passing in, a giving out? I appreciate the Karma doctrine; but, taking that for granted, why does man not remember he *has* been? What use these endless lives with no memory to unite them?"

"Memory would destroy interest. Life is a new experience until it ceases to be desired; until it has atoned and suffered, and earned release. Then the One lapses into the Whole."

"And I have lived before, and may live again, and yet not know of that previous life? Its good or evil, its pleasure or its pain?"

"There is neither good nor evil; pleasure nor pain; there is nothing but the Soul. It is the self, and thou art It."

Craddock laid down his pen and rose, and took the chair opposite the philosophical speaker.

"When you talk like that," he said, "the hopelessness of my task assumes proportions utterly beyond my com-

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prehension. Listen a moment. Would it not be possible to remember a previous incarnation ? ”

“ It is given to some. For some there are to whom Death is but a rapid change ; an instant passing from Form to Form. That—is the price of some sin too great for earth’s atonement. Memory tortures each re-birth so that it seems an endless, endless chain, weighted with a crime God has not forgiven. This it is to be—*accursed*. ”

Quietly he laid down the meerschaum. “ Such a one thou knowest, *sahib*, ” he said. “ Shall I tell thee of him ? ”

“ Of him ! Who ? ”

“ Nay, there is no need to tell, ” went on the Oriental calmly, “ for he is on his way. Yet not so soon as another messenger. Thy peace will be soon disturbed ; the messenger is already at thy door. ”

“ I did not know you were a seer, Dharma Lal, ” said Craddock uneasily. “ I have no wish to be disturbed by messengers or strangers. You know my door is shut against all intruders. ”

“ I know it ; nevertheless they come. They bring news, I think, of one you care for. ”

Craddock started, and leant forward in his chair. “ One I care for ? Can you tell—is it man or woman ? ”

“ Ask me no more ; wait in patience. Thoughts of the morrow wear out the present vigour of the senses of man. ”

“ Philosophy is cold comfort to an anxious heart. Your words have disturbed me, my friend. There is one of whom I crave news. The months are many since I heard from him. Had I known you possessed so magical a faculty as that of foreseeing events, I would have unburdened my heart long ago. ”

“ I knew it was burdened, and that is why I tried to direct thy thoughts into other channels. He who is free from desires is also free from grief. ”

“ Can you tell me aught of this boy whom I love as a son, and of whose welfare I am ignorant ? ”

The Oriental shook his head. “ Ask me not. I have said news is on the way ; let that suffice. Listen— ”

He held up his hand. At that moment the bell pealed loudly ; a sound of footsteps crossing the hall reached

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Craddock's ears. He went quickly to the door; the butler was just about to open the outer one of the hall.

"Don't deny me; I will see whoever it is," he exclaimed.

Thrilled with anxiety he stood there looking in the direction of the porch.

A figure came quickly in, throwing off a dripping cloak and hat. The light fell on his face; a momentary disappointment touched Craddock. It was not he whom he expected; it was Godfrey St. Just.

He went forward, giving kindly welcome. "My dear fellow—what a surprise! But—are you alone?"

Godfrey took the outstretched hand. It was very cold and tremulous.

"Yes," he said, and a certain vague uneasiness crept into his voice; "but I hoped to find David here. Surely he has returned by this time?"

"By this time?" Cold fear laid hands on Craddock. What had chanced to the boy in all these months?

"No, he is not here," he said slowly; "nor have I had any word from him since you were at St. Brieuc!"

Godfrey stood quite still for a moment, looking down on the troubled face that had aged so much since last he had seen it.

"St. Brieuc?" he echoed. "No more have I. We parted there, for a few days; he was to rejoin me at Brest. He never did rejoin me. I waited; then I wrote. I got no reply. I concluded he had met—other friends, or gone his own way, and that we should meet sooner or later on the return journey; but I never came across him at any of the places where we had arranged to go. At last I grew uneasy and thought I would come down here and see if you had any news of him."

Craddock's face looked ghastly in the dim light. A thousand fears were rampant in his mind; he only knew how many and how wild they were by reason of the restraint that had so long checked their vague whispers.

"This is strange news," he said feebly. "Come into my study and let us talk it over. Surely—but you are wet! Would you like to go to a room and change? I can lend you clothes."

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"No, thank you; my big cloak kept me dry, and I drove here. The man has gone round to the stables."

"You must stay the night, of course. Where have you come from—London?"

"Yes."

They were within the room and he was staring at the strange figure in Indian dress.

"This is my friend and instructor, Dharma Lal," said Craddock. "I have been deep in Eastern philosophies; but now I have no mind for anything but your news. Sit down and tell me everything."

Godfrey glanced uneasily at the tall figure, the dark inscrutable face of the Oriental professor.

"Am I to speak frankly?" he said.

"By all means; Dharma Lal will not betray confidences. Besides—strangely enough, he foretold your coming."

A faint smile of contempt touched Godfrey's thin lips. Was Craddock in his dotage already? or had much study left his brain weak? Weak enough to credit the predictions and omens of mystics such as this?

The Brahmin saw the smile, and read the scepticism. It in no way annoyed him; he could read this arrogant young priest better than the said priest could read him.

"I will withdraw if the *sahib* wishes," he said.

"No, no!" exclaimed Craddock. "Stay there; you may be able to help us. Now, Godfrey, tell me all; from the beginning."

Concisely and clearly the story was laid before him; up to that fatal meeting with Lady Pamela. From that hour Godfrey had had no news.

"What do you think?" asked Craddock uneasily.

Godfrey looked at him. "What can one think? She gained some influence over him; either he is with her, or near her. I should imagine she is the only one who could give news of him."

"He has never mentioned her name to me," said Craddock. "Only, of course, I saw . . . any one could see he was never the same after that visit to London. Still—" He moved uneasily; his eyes glanced at the imperturbable figure in the background; the man to whom men and women were but temporary illusions of Form, and all

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human affection only a bondage of the senses to that form.

"The friendship was an evil friendship; the woman is an evil woman," remarked the *pundit* wisely. "Vex not thy heart, my friend; for sorrow cometh but of thinking sorrow. All that we are by mind is made. Hast thou not learnt it? Written it for the help of others? Canst thou not take its help to thyself?"

Godfrey St. Just stared wonderingly at the speaker. His words were as strange as his appearance, and presence here.

"What sort of teaching is that?" he asked.

"It is a wiser teaching than thou hast gained," answered the Oriental. "Search the Scriptures; ask thy purblind priests, can they tell thee more than that *thou art*. Born of a thought; thy life but a symbol of a thought; thy creed a battle-ground of superstitions. Coming from the Invisible, treading the path of suffering, canst thou say to *what* thou wilt return?"

"Can you? can any one?" exclaimed Godfrey quickly. "I don't know what sort of religion you profess, or from what source you derive your proverbs, but I imagine you are of Eastern blood, and possibly learned in Eastern literature. That—would imply as complete an ignorance of my faith as my Occidental teaching implies of yours."

"Ah, Godfrey, my dear fellow," exclaimed Craddock, "this is no time for controversy, nor have I any longer the patience to endure it. I have cut those cords once and for all. I don't take things for granted. I have gone deeper. I am exploring the very centres of Life and Destiny. At least I am on the road to peace."

He made a sign to the Oriental. "Leave us, Dharma Lal. My young friend and yourself are as far asunder as the races of the East and West, and I am too wearied for discussions such as would be inevitable between you."

As the door closed he looked at Godfrey's priest-like dress.

"What does *that* mean?" he asked.

The young man rose and began to pace the room, as was his custom when perturbed.

"I am going to become a priest of Rome," he said.

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"There is truth in what you said, Mr. Craddock: 'I don't take things for granted.' I too have placed my trust in wiser hands. They will help me; they are guiding me. Even if some errors have crept into that Faith, it is the oldest and surest we know."

"Neither the oldest, nor assuredly the surest," said Craddock sadly; "but since it satisfies you, that is enough. Every soul must work out its own salvation, bigotists and sectarians alike. Uniformity of belief is as impossible as uniformity of race; and both are an accident, the fruit of circumstance."

"God has a purpose in such seeming accidents," said Godfrey. "Do you think only an accident drove David here? Awoke your interest—brought him into that fatal area of notoriety in London—wrecked his spiritual purity on the rock of passion?"

"How do you know that?" asked Craddock.

"I am sure of it; that woman tracked him as surely as a desert beast tracks its prey. I have been through the mill; I knew what sort of woman she was. David had resisted once, and because of that felt himself so sure. When he refused to accompany me——"

"Stay," said Craddock. "Are you sure you tried to persuade him? If you saw that he was growing weak, could you not have guarded him by your own experience; or, failing that, why did you leave him alone, at the mercy of this titled harlot?"

"I did my best," said Godfrey sullenly. "I told him my own experiences. I pointed out what sort of Messalina this society beauty was; but it was no use. As he did not join me I could only conclude he preferred her company."

Craddock rose stiffly from his chair. Involuntarily his eyes turned to the veiled picture on the easel. Had heredity spoken out at last? Claimed its needs of the flesh as spoils of the spirit?

For a long moment he stood, motionless, speechless. Then he turned to Godfrey.

"I must find out what has happened. I cannot believe that David is living in sin, as you insinuate. I will go to London myself. I will see this woman. I will go to-morrow. There is no time to lose."

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He sank back into his chair and looked regretfully around his beautiful room. To leave all this comfort and peace and atmosphere of deepening interest—it was a painful sacrifice; but was he not learning that the true meaning of life is selflessness. The giving of the One for the Whole. Only he “who is free from desires, sees the majesty of the self by the grace of the Creator.”

He had written these wise sayings; argued these deep philosophies. Had the time come when he must put them to the test?

With the morrow he departed. Godfrey asked if he might stay on at Trebarwick. He was in very comfortable quarters, and he had a mind for an intellectual tussle with this enlightened Oriental who had dared to bring him to book. Who was he but a semi-barbarian? A Buddhist probably—one of those bemused and arrogant beings who talk a jargon of incomprehensibility, and believe in the doctrine of Re-incarnation, and affirm that Krishna and Christ are one and the same.

Well, it would be interesting to hear something of this esoteric wisdom while awaiting news of his errant friend.

Craddock arrived at Grosvenor Street late in the evening. It was an unconventional hour for a call, but he was in no mood for conventionalities. A manservant who wore no livery answered his imperative ring and knock.

“Lady Pamela is abroad, on the Riviera,” he informed the visitor.

“When will she return?” asked Craddock.

The man could not say. Her ladyship never gave long notice of her comings and goings. She might be in England by Christmas.

Craddock was turning away, when a hansom drew up. A stout, heavy-looking man dismounted, tossed the driver a coin, and then turned to the door which the footman was holding open. His eyes glanced inquiringly at Craddock, who was close enough to make it apparent he had been paying a call.

Seeing him enter as one who proclaimed mastership, the Squire took a sudden resolution.

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"Pardon me, are you Mr. Reuben Leaffe?" he asked.

"Yes. I haven't the honour——"

"No. You don't know me; I called to see Lady Pamela. I hear she is abroad. My business is somewhat important."

Reuben Leaffe gave a swift glance at the pale, worn face, the anxious eyes. "If I can assist you," he said, "pray come in." He led the way into a room on the ground floor.

"I live mostly at my club when my wife is away," he said. He clicked on the electric light and then pointed to a chair.

"I believe my name is not unknown to you," said Craddock. "You once wrote to me, very generously, respecting a young man who was under my care. I am Morgan Craddock."

A gleam of interest showed in the dark, watchful eyes. "Craddock—yes, of course, I remember. Trebarwick Hall, Cornwall, is it not? In what way can I serve you?"

"I'm afraid I did not respond very cordially to your kind offer respecting David—Hermon," said the Squire, with some hesitation.

"You told me the young priest was under your guardianship, and his future would be provided for."

"You have a good memory," said Craddock.

"It is a necessity of my position," answered the financier.

"But—you were saying?"

"I was about to ask if you, or Lady Pamela Leaffe, can give me David Hermon's present address?"

The Jew magnate stared at the speaker for a moment. "I—or my wife? . . . Why should we know anything of this young man's whereabouts? Is he in London?"

"I don't know where he is," said Craddock.

Reuben Leaffe drew up a chair to the table and sat down. "Then—why do you imagine I, or Lady Pamela, are better informed?"

"Simply because Lady Pamela was with him, or in very near neighbourhood, when he disappeared."

A dark streak of red showed suddenly in Reuben Leaffe's sallow face.

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"Your words are rather significant, sir. Kindly explain them?"

Craddock did so, stating plain bald facts as he knew them to be.

Response came hard and cool on his statements. "To the best of my knowledge my wife has never been in Brittany. She was in town all last season from April to July. You say your young friend disappeared in the month of June. I have good reason to know that Lady Pamela was here in this house all through May and June, with the exception of three or four days, spent with Lady Silchester in Hampshire."

"I am sorry to contradict you," said Craddock. He took out a pocket-book and glanced over some dates. "Your wife paid me a visit at Trebarwick in June; Lady Silchester was with her. Did you know that?"

Again that dark flush showed under the sallow skin. "For what purpose, may I ask?"

"To obtain David's address. He had then left for Brittany."

"And are you insinuating that Lady Pamela followed him—there?"

"I only know she went to St. Brieuc, where he and his friend were staying, almost as soon as she had secured the address. She met David and his friend at St. Quay, as I told you, and from that hour, neither I, nor any one who knows him, have received any word as to his welfare or his whereabouts."

Reuben Leaffe sprang to his feet, his eyes blazing with anger.

"Are you aware that your words convey a very objectionable meaning, Mr. Craddock?"

"I regret it; but I am only giving you the plain facts of the case."

"Do you mean to say that because this boy has chosen to disappear—after——"

The words choked him. He knew quite well what had been meant. That if he cast back the imputation as a lie he was but defending the honour of a worthless woman. Yet pride, pride of race, pride of manhood, forced him to affect disbelief.

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"It is ridiculous, impossible! Lady Pamela's interest in David Hermon was of the slightest. Admiration for his preaching, I grant; nothing more."

Yet as he said it he saw before his eyes a disordered oratory, a confusion of flowers and missals; an ivory crucifix lying on the floor. It lay in a drawer now in this very room; rescued from the desecration of an adulteress. For, after all, she *had* cheated him, as women of her stamp ever have, and ever will trick and cheat men.

Still her effrontery amazed him. She had so readily and smilingly accounted for every day of his absence; fitted in amusements, duties, occupations, visits, so that her engagement book looked an inviolable record. Besides, Lady Silchester had been with her all the time. Surely she, at least, would not have leant herself to such deception.

Craddock's voice broke again over the tumult of his thoughts.

"If you can give me no information yourself, perhaps you would favour me with Lady Pamela's address? I must write to her since I cannot see her."

"Her address?"

The big, heavy man looked vaguely round the room. What to do—what to say? What form should his vengeance take? For some form it should take; sudden, swift, certain. That he swore to himself. Men of his stamp were not to be trifled with. In days of old they had brought their faithless women to the priest, and set them before the Lord, and forced them to drink a terrible potion, so that their guilt should be known, and their shame exemplified. To this day the women of his race were chaste wives; held their husband's honour as their own. Never did their names figure in Divorce Courts.* It was only these Christians—these mock virtuous daughters of an alien creed, who scoffed at virtue as "old-fashioned," and went their way to sin and shame with the effrontery of the purchased *cocotte*!

But yet—what should he say to this man? How spare her name, until proof was incontrovertible?

He looked at the Squire's calm face and felt that decep-

* It is very rare to find a Jewish divorce case.

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tion was useless. A sense of intolerable shame, intolerable anger seized him.

"Leave this to me," he said hoarsely. "I promise you shall have news soon—if news can be obtained. Will you give me data of that visit to St. Brieuc, if you have it?"

Silently Craddock laid a paper on the table before him. "There are the dates, and the route." Then a sudden fear swept over him. He clutched the paper as that other hand went out to it. "Promise me," he said, "that you will not harm David. He is but a boy, a mere child in the hands of a woman—like——"

"Enough," said Reuben Leaffe harshly. "No names! I promise your 'David' shall suffer no harm from me—if I meet him; but I shall not meet him; he is not with her; he fought for my honour once before. I trust him. But she——"

He signed to the door. Craddock took up his hat and went out without another word.

XIV

WITH the assurance that he had done all that could be done, Craddock resumed his tranquil life. He felt a conviction that he would either hear news of David, or that he would return before long.

To Godfrey St. Just he gave but a brief account of his visit to London. He resented that desertion of his friend in the hour of trial; he blamed him in a measure for what had occurred. Yet all the time his own mind was convincing him of falsifying his new beliefs.

The human *Ego* is a growing soul, and it gathers experience as it gathers life. It strives for the highest, falls, yet strives again; departs to learn its backslidings; returns to the casual body when the thirst for sentient existence again manifests itself, ascending at last to that higher plane of spiritual satisfaction where conflict ceases, and Eternal Rest begins.

These were the truths expounded to him, and in which he steeped himself with deepening zest. Nothing astonished him more than a request from Godfrey St. Just—a somewhat shamefaced request—to stay on a little longer; to hear a little more of Dharma's Lal's "theories," as he called them.

"Stay as long as you please," said Craddock heartily; "but what of your superiors; your seminary? They would certainly not approve of your dipping into such unorthodox studies; I am not sure that your Church hasn't banned and excommunicated everything appertaining to Eastern philosophies. They go too far and too deep; they prove too conclusively just where the Church stepped in to manage the religions of mankind, and how admirably she has succeeded in doing it! Confusion worse confounded is a mild way of summing up the Tragedy of Sects."

"It is not my Church yet," said Godfrey. "Only—it

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is the one that has promised me some security from this raging torment of Doubt."

"You think to escape that torment?" questioned the calm voice of Dharma Lal. "You say your Church will secure you. Believe me, my young *padre*, when I say this. Priests cannot help you; God Himself cannot help you. From Him you came; to Him you must return. Fit yourself for that return."

"But how? How?"

"You ask me that? You who three days ago insulted me to my face! Who in your heart of hearts despise my colour and my blood! Listen, then, young product of Western arrogance! What race, think you, did God first create? Those of my colour, or of yours? What religion first manifested itself to man through man's awakened soul? Mine or yours? What records of a world bind *this* world to consciousness or to meaning? Yours of the West, or mine of the East? Who has solved the deepest problems of life and attuned them to the Infinite, or produced the wisest thinkers, or taught the first principles of cosmic evolution? Of that great *All* that is of us as we of It; from whence we come—to whence we return? Have your priests a wiser or more helpful truth to teach than the Law of Karma; the law that makes man's deeds at once his judge and his accuser and his hell? For, believe me or not, yet this is truth I speak to you. No vicarious sacrifice shall wipe man's sins from man's soul. His deeds are as pebbles thrown into the waters of life, sending forth their consequences in ever-widening circles to all eternity."

"If these things were accepted truths," said Godfrey, "they would have appeared in our religion, in our Bible——"

"Your Bible!" interposed the Oriental. "What is your Bible? A record of histories and events; good and evil lives; sins and lusts of men; horrors of war, cruelty, bigotry, persecution. It holds not a tithe of the wisdom of our Veda. Neither is it so authentic. Your priests in the past have mauled it, and condensed it, and omitted whole books at their own discretion. Your Romish Church would not even allow it to be read by the laity

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until forced to do so. And their version is less authentic than that of your Reformed Church."

"It is wiser to withhold information than to see it misused," said Godfrey.

"There speaks the pupil of a treacherous school*!" One founded on an infamous despotism; its aim that of destroying liberty, intelligence, will, even thought, so as to deliver men into its bondage, and hold them helpless and ignorant under the rule of monarchs who in their turn were governed by their Confessors."

"That all belongs to the Dark Ages," argued Godfrey. "Such things are over and done with."

A sarcastic smile curled the lips of Dharma Lal. "Do not be so sure of that, my young prelate. The poisonous tentacles of this Society still clutch at the souls and wills of weak humanity, undermining an apparently harmless surface of religious fervour. I call to your mind a certain encyclical letter of a famous Pope whose tenets your church obeys *to this day*, when it can find any country subservient enough to permit its absolute control. There are two characteristic points in that letter. One declares '*it is odious and absurd to grant liberty of conscience to the people*'; the other states, '*The liberty of the Press cannot be held in too much horror.*' The old despotism! Do you deny that it still holds good? Blind the eyes; fetter the limbs; cramp the intellect. Take the young malleable tools and work them blindly in your interests. Terrify the soul, and you become its Master; the Controller of Destiny, of Kingdoms!"

Godfrey sprang to his feet. "I tell you such things are *not* done in these days! Even if they were, look at your own land of wisdom, its infamies and immoralities, its idol worship, its——"

The Oriental held up a warning hand. "Twenty-five centuries have passed since my Master gave to His first followers a message repeated in a later era by your Christ: 'Go forth. Proclaim the Life of Holiness. Glorious in inception, in progress, in consummation; in spirit, and in letter.' We have failed, and you have failed; for man

* The Society of Jesus—the Jesuits.

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is weak, and the world is full of corruption. Yet—we hope as you can never hope, for we *know* what you have failed to grasp. The craving for life, mere animal life, is a moral bondage. He alone is happy who escapes the desire for its conditions.”

“Who can escape desire who holds life *as* a condition?” asked Godfrey scornfully.

“They who have conquered the lower nature and ascended to a higher mental plane. If you priests were wise, you would tell your people one important fact, not a hundred stifling creeds. You would say, ‘Remember your Future depends upon *yourself*.’”

“That would be making man his own Saviour and his own Judge!” exclaimed Godfrey.

“It would make the individual what your priesthood has tried to represent itself—man’s Saviour and his Judge; allowing his soul no freedom, his mind no outlook save what it permits. Instead of bowing your own proud necks before the Inviolable Law, you stiffen them into vaunted supremacy, and deny that law’s existence.”

“What law do you mean?”

“Causation. If you could read Nature, the Universe, the Science of Being, you would understand that the same cause always produces the same effect. If fire burns once it burns always. If man transgresses a law of his being he suffers. The reason of such suffering is the broken Law. At some time, in some period of existence he has committed an action that determines his future circumstances. To convince I will recall to you an instance. In past ages lived a man whom Fate and evil fortune persecuted, and his soul grew bitter within him, and he hated his fellow-man, and cursed existence as a thing profitless and of no account. On a day marked in the history of mankind as no other day is marked, a chance came to this man to redeem his soul by one kindly deed, to lift himself out of the common round of suffering. . . . He let his chance pass by. It passed with a martyr’s rebuke. It passed to the stony heights of Calvary. It passed, leaving him desolate and accursed, for life denies him nothing save forgetfulness of life. From age to age he lives, and suffers, and *remembers*. In this his Karma

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differs from all others. Yet to other men he seems but as themselves. Know you such a one, Sahibs of the West ? ”

Two startled faces looked at the speaker. The same thought was in each mind, yet to speak of it was impossible. That gay comrade ; the laughing Bohemian, the man to whom all countries of the world had seemed familiar ; he who claimed no name or birthplace, yet seemingly possessed all he needed, was this the victim of the Inexorable Law, passing through the ages, gathering the truth and the wisdom of each, yet bound for ever to that Wheel of Life which turned so wearily on the plane of materiality, whirling through cycle after cycle of ever-widening magnitude until the human brain reeled before the maddening circuit ?

“ You do not answer ? But you know whom I mean. I give you his story as an exemplification of the law I expound. I do not ask you to credit it. If you have knowledge of him, that is enough. And—something tells me you will hear of him soon. He is already winged for your service. Let your hearts be at peace.”

“ What could he mean ? ” asked Godfrey as the door closed on the strange prophet.

“ He has solved a mystery that has perplexed me these ten years past,” said Craddock. He turned to his table and his work. Godfrey sat still and troubled by the fire.

Mysteries were thickening, not clearing, and conscience accused him hourly of his part in David's fall. For that he had fallen he felt sure. A saint from heaven could not have helped himself. He had been to the island. He knew all that had transpired, or at least as nearly all as a third person could know. Sometimes he wondered if David, maddened and distraught, had cast himself into the sea. But then his body would have been found. Some news would have come to hand. Or had he fled to some wilderness of atonement, driven hither and thither by that ever-haunting horror of his sin ?

He was not as other youths, as himself, for instance. It would have gone hard with him to fight and lose ; to be vanquished and humiliated in his own sight for evermore.

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As he sat there buried in thought a servant entered and laid some papers on the table by his side, the daily papers that the post had brought. He was so used to opening them and reading them that Craddock took no notice of the rustling of unfolded sheets or uncut pages.

But suddenly a cry of horror sounded through the room, and Godfrey started to his feet.

"My God! Listen to this," he cried. "Tragedy in an hotel at Monte Carlo." Reuben Leaffe has killed his wife! Shot her in the hotel bedroom—accidentally they say——"

Craddock sprang from his chair. He seized the paper and read the paragraph pointed out by Godfrey's shaking finger.

"Accident?" he muttered. "It reads like it—but——"

The paper fell from his grasp. He felt suddenly sick with the horror of remembrance. Reuben Leaffe's face—his words.

Was it only an accident that he had been examining his gun prior to a pigeon-shooting match at the Cerolo? That it had suddenly gone off, and . . . Why had *she* been there—in his way? Was the tragedy planned, determined in that London room, carried out unflinching at the earliest opportunity?

"Horrible!" he repeated, thinking of the radiant, mocking witch who had once sat in this very room, angering him as no woman had ever succeeded in doing.

"Horrible indeed," echoed Godfrey, as he stooped to pick up the paper. "But—our saint is avenged."

Craddock sank back in his chair, covering his face with his hands. David *was* avenged. That was true enough. But of what use was vengeance? It could not wash away sin or cleanse the soul, or heal the stings of conscience. The inexorable law could not be appeased thus. Fire burns on and on, fed by the fuel of undying memory. Had not such a fire burnt in his own heart? Was it extinguished—even yet? For actions determine circumstances and mould character; and to do harm is to reap harm, on the plane of causation or the plane of limitation.

Godfrey St. Just looked at the bowed figure, and wondered what so engrossed him. This tragedy was shocking,

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yet it bore on its face the stern decree of the Levitical law—"An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," destruction of life for destruction of life.

Wantonly and knowingly this woman had chosen to wreck a young, pure soul, to draw it into sin, leave it for ever smirched and stained by a hideous memory. That her doom had been swift and tragic seemed a cruder form of justice than she and such as she usually met. But who should say it was undeserved, knowing the facts as he knew them?

Then his thoughts returned to David. Where was he? Would he ever return? Would news of this tragedy reach him in his hiding-place? He pictured him as he had seen him on the Mount; his young raptured face; his joy at sight of the angel of his vision.

As he recalled that time a sudden thought flashed to him. Supposing David had gone *there*, to that famed sanctuary where the great Archangel stood as guardian and protector of all sorrowful and penitent souls?

He stood quite still, looking down at the paper with its tragic news, asking himself whether he should set out and make for Mont St. Michel without loss of time. He had not thought of the place before, and yet now it seemed the one and only refuge that his friend would be likely to seek. He raised his head. Craddock was still sitting absorbed and meditative, regardless of his presence.

Godfrey called his name softly twice ere he heard him. "Mr. Craddock," he said, "I have suddenly thought of a likely place to find David."

And in rapid words he sketched the history of those days and weeks on the Mount of St. Michel. "It drew him like a spell. You remember, do you not, that vision *here* on your own Cornish monolith? The secret and inspiration of his mission thenceforwards. Well, imagine what it meant to him to see that Figure of his dreams confronting him, exact in form and stature as was that St. Michael to whose service he had vowed himself. It has come to me like a command to seek him there. Shall I go?"

Craddock was looking at him eagerly, a light of hope in his eyes and on his worn face.

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"Go—why, yes, Godfrey, and I will go with you. He may need friends, and comfort, and aid. Who knows? Though he seems to have forgotten us, let us show that we have not forgotten him."

So once again the divine law of selflessness was at work, and Craddock, denying himself the home he loved, the comforts he needed, the peace he craved above all else, went forth to face storm and chill and discomfort of travel.

Two days later they landed at St. Malo.

It had been a horrible crossing. They went straight to an hotel in the Place Châteaubriand, and Craddock, who was ill and suffering, retired to his room and to bed. Rain was falling heavily. The harbour and quay were only visible through mist and gloom. St. Servan and its *Pont roulant* were melancholy landmarks to Godfrey of a happier holiday.

But next morning the rain had ceased. The sun was shining over the blue waters. A sense of joyousness and relief was in the air, and in the bustling streets and quays.

By Godfrey's advice they left their luggage at Pontorson and took a conveyance to the Mount. Craddock had never seen it before, and the beauty and the wonder of the structure was intensified by the extraordinary similitude of its Cornish brother across the Channel. He did not wonder that David had been fascinated and detained here, as Godfrey had said.

They entered by the ramparts through the Porte du Roi; then passed between the castellated towers of the Châlet to the north front of the Merveille.

"Wait here and I will make inquiries," said Godfrey. "I know the custodians well. I am sure to find one about the court, although few, if any, visitors come here at this time of the year."

He returned some ten minutes later.

"I found our old guide, Bernardot," he said. "He remembers David, of course; but he has not been here since we left in the summer. He declares he could not have come unrecognized."

Craddock sighed wearily. The journey had tried him even more than he had anticipated. Hope had alone sustained him, and now he learnt that it was all fruitless.

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"Still, as we are here," continued Godfrey, "we may as well stay the night. The Hôtel Poulard is very comfortable. If you like, I will return to Pontorson for anything you need. The people here will be only too glad to have us. Visitors are rare once the summer is over."

"I confess I should like to stay," said Craddock. "There is an extraordinary fascination about the place. Besides, it is odd, but do you know I can't get rid of the idea that we shall find or hear of David here—sooner or later."

"I hope we may," said Godfrey. "I felt discouraged at the first check, I must say. It was June when I left him. It is November now. Where has he been all these months? He had very little money too, and his clothes were all packed and left behind at Paimpol. The people told me he had only gone over to Bréhat to see the island, and was coming back for his luggage, intending to go on to Brest. Since then he seems to have disappeared off the face of the earth."

"Would she have known—that woman? Perhaps I ought to have written to her, as I intended."

"Do you suppose she would have told the truth?" said Godfrey contemptuously. "No, no, Mr. Craddock, you couldn't have acted differently. We must just wait and hope that David will break this silence sooner or later."

"Suspense is hard to bear," said Craddock wearily. "I felt no uneasiness until I saw you. But since then I confess I am haunted by the idea that some misfortune has overtaken him. He may be ill, suffering—dead."

"Oh, I think he is alive!" said Godfrey. "Bring your Karmic philosophies to bear on that, Squire. And now I'll be off to catch that tram and fetch our things from Pontorson. I love this place, and I've never stayed here at this time of the year. Let us wait and see what the gods will send us in the way of news. You'll find endless occupation in exploring. If you like, I'll call Bernardot, or would you rather be left to yourself?"

"Yes—I should prefer that," said Craddock. "Where is the hotel?"

"Between the second and third gates, just beyond—there. Poulard Ainé. You can't mistake. We shall have it all to ourselves, I fancy."

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Craddock found his way to the southern side of the Mount, and examined the little village, its quaint houses straggling up to the Abbey walls. Every turn and point revealed something of interest or beauty.

It seemed strange to think of it as once it was, a great bare rock, a haunt of sea birds, a landmark for all the coast around. And then that legendary visit of the archangel and its subsequent result: the little chapel set on high, and bearing that Angel's mighty name.

Craddock seemed to trace David's daily pilgrimage, to re-live the delight and admiration that had filled his letters. He had seemed so happy, so content, and then *this* had happened.

The short day was closing in as he sought the hotel. Godfrey had ordered fires and dinner, but he had not yet returned.

The Squire drew up a chair to the stove and lit a cigarette. He was very tired, and yet strangely restless. The dusk was falling; a strange stillness brooded everywhere. He missed the thunders of the sea around his Cornish home. This profound calm held something of awe or omen, so it seemed to him.

"I used not to be the prey of nervous fancies," he thought, and getting up restlessly he went to the window and looked out over the darkening sea.

He heard the door open behind him. A pleasant voice *patoised* of light brought in for "m'sieu's service," also of a visitor. "Would m'sieu excuse that this room was the only one prepared, and that the strange m'sieu——"

But Craddock had flashed round and cut short excuses and apologies. A cry of welcome astounded the speaker. They knew each other, then? These travellers—coming so strangely to this spot at a time when one expected no guests!

"What good providence sent you here? Welcome—a thousand times. Did you know——"

The words died off his lips. Something was in that face at once sad and ominous.

"Did I know? Alas! my good friend, I know all, everything there is to know—the object of your search,

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the reason of your journey. We meet—unexpectedly—as we have always met; but with purpose, as purpose has always planned such meetings.”

“Have you any news? Have you any knowledge where he is—our David?”

“I have no knowledge save that if souls may expiate their sins, he should be the happier for such expiation.”

“My God! what has happened? He’s not—dead?”

The Wanderer made a hurried gesture. “It is astonishing, is it not? So young—so innocent. I could tell you much if I had the habit of exactness, but days and years to me mean little! Sit down, my good Squire—sit down, and listen. It is right and fit that we who decided his destiny should suffer for its eclipse. Let me recall your words that night in Paris when we were playing the *Deus ex Machina* to his future. You told me I had come into the boy’s life charged with novelty and surprise, to let the light of day into locked and secret chambers. And I answered that you were doing far more for him. I had but pointed the way; you were providing the means—”

He paused. “Yes?” said Craddock. “And you wondered if we should ever have to regret the end? It’s not—that?”

“It is—that. If exchange of one form of life for another be death, then David is dead. I found him broken, crazed, his brain deranged by agonies he had undergone. . . . And yet, was it not strange, he still remembered *me*! In the chaos of his disordered mind my memory shone, a feeble light, an unworthy one, God knows, yet still a light that kept him from despair. In my knowledge of his need of me, in my haste to reach his side, I risked a passage in a wild storm, in an unseaworthy boat. We were driven on the rocks of the Breton coast, and he adventured on our rescue—myself and a fisher lad, who was more than useless. Alone and unaided our young martyr set out on the perilous exploit. For myself I cared not. Death cannot harm me save by robbing some chance joys of life. But I owed something to the fisher lad. We got safe to shore as by a miracle. David had not known who it was he saved. In that lay his atonement. He offered

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his life for sake of a life unknown, as one gives one's hand to a friend. But when he knew us safe, and I spoke . . . his joy was more than tortured heart could bear. Some vessel burst in brain, or lungs—I know not—nor does it matter now. He was in my arms . . . his last words were of me. I had won some human love, and by its aid my feet were set one short stride farther on the ascending path. I—who once rescued him from the sea, gave him back to the sea again."

Craddock gazed at the face of the speaker, so strangely moved from all the calm or gaiety of old. That David was dead scarcely surprised him. He had read that news in the first glance of meeting eyes. But—above the sadness of the story and the heroism of its conclusion, he had marked *one* word which furnished clue and point of interest.

"You rescued him from the sea . . . you ?"

"Even I. It says much, yet little. I saved him from that shipwreck ; I left him a year-old babe to the mercies of kinder hearts than those to whom he owed the doubtful blessing of existence. I drew to him your interest and your notice, and I asked your help. You gave it. You will have your reward. But now the task is finished. You may rest. One good deed you have done, and for sake of it peace shall bless your days. No better gift can life bestow."

"I am learning that," said Craddock humbly ; "even as I am learning that the end of life is but its beginning, the renewal of that which cannot cease to be renewed."

"Then—at last you are learning Truth. Art lives and re-lives, and love that blesses human lives, and goodness that makes those lives divine ; and divinity that is born into humanity in types of greater or lesser significance to teach the holy lessons of suffering and of selflessness. Our David was such a one. Strong of soul, pure of heart, and yet not strong enough for life's most subtle tempting. For by woman man fell from his high estate ; by woman is he given back again and yet again into physical existence. By woman is he cursed, and by woman is he redeemed. Only one Incarnation was pure enough and holy enough to defy her treachery. For sake of it her soul shall win

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redemption. Not for long æons. Not for countless and still countless ages. For she who has cradled manhood and Divinity cannot but be slave of both."

He rose and stood there in the dim light of the lamp, looking gravely at the man he had called friend.

"I must leave you now," he said. "Make your way homewards. This—he wrote for you ere he passed away, and this for Godfrey, and this for Ruth."

He laid three letters on the table, one by one.

"My task is ended," he said. "I want no word with that young priest. True to his new guides, he forsook and forswore and denied in the hour of trial. Yet seeing how evil works for good, and that from man's treachery sprang man's salvation, I lay no blame on him. He, too, must tread the stony path to Calvary, and find there—what David has found."

There came a sudden mist and dimness over Craddock's eyes; the smart of tears long unknown. Half-shamed, as all manhood is shamed of its truest and holiest emotions, he turned aside. When he looked up he was alone.

On the table, under the lamp-rays, lay three letters. David's last words to those who had played so fateful a part in his life. Craddock lifted one of them, his own.

With trembling fingers he opened the envelope and read the few brief, unsteady lines.

Not much they said, but yet enough.

Through sin and shame, through terror and through grief, through agony of doubt and madness of despair, and yet through joy of something won from out it all, David had found his way to Calvary!

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